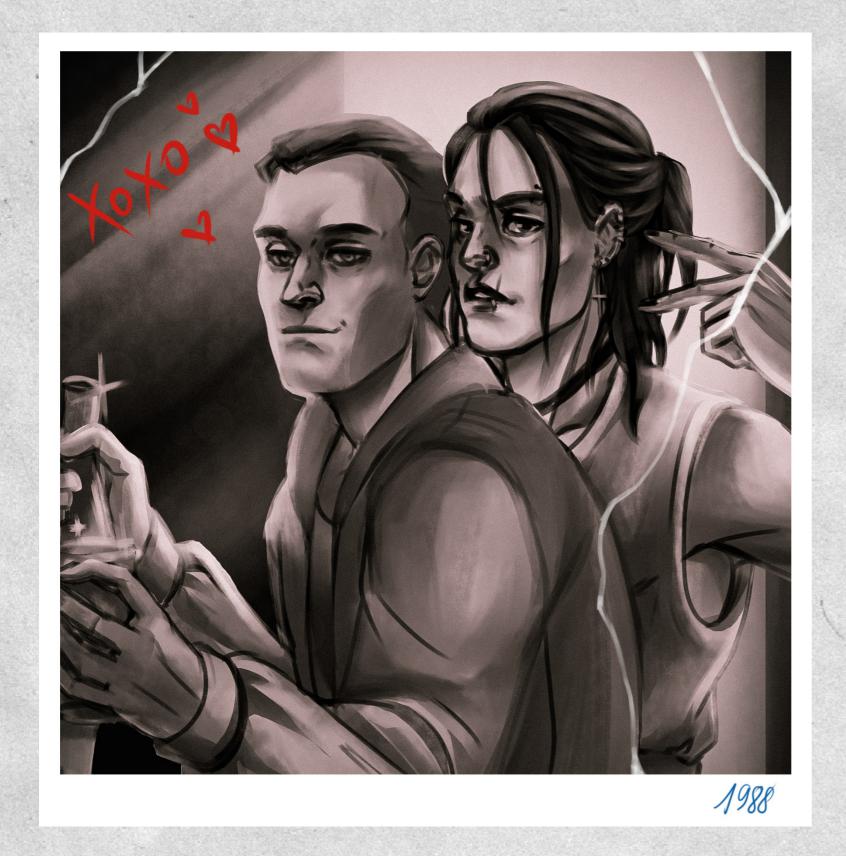
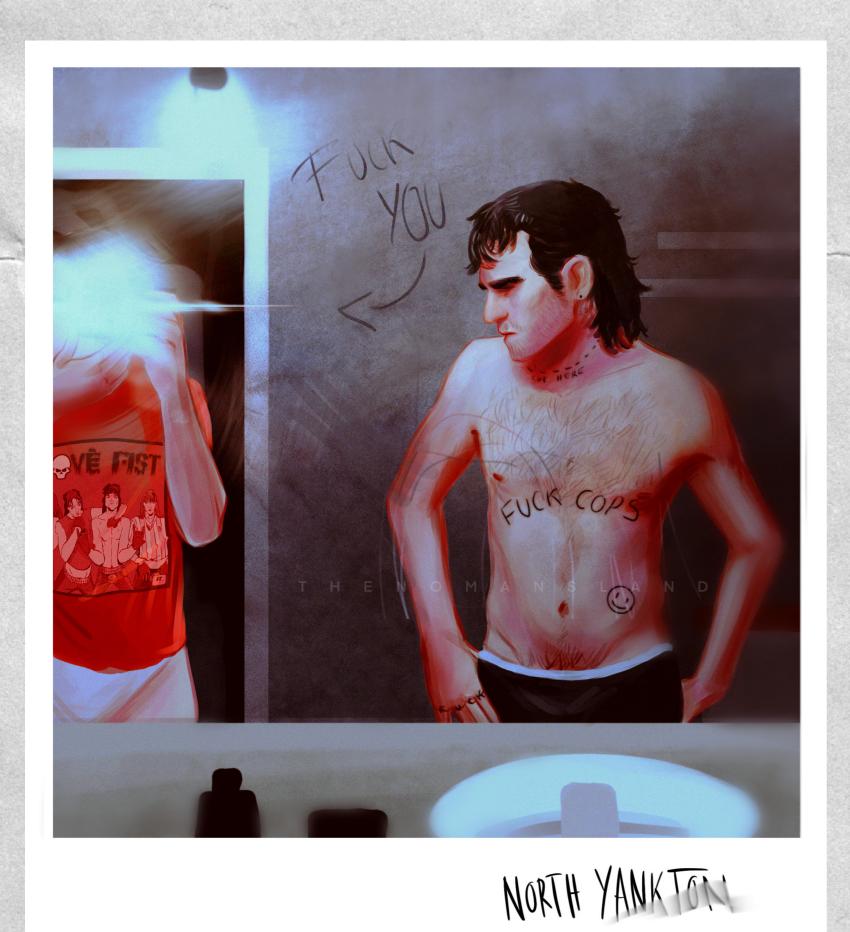
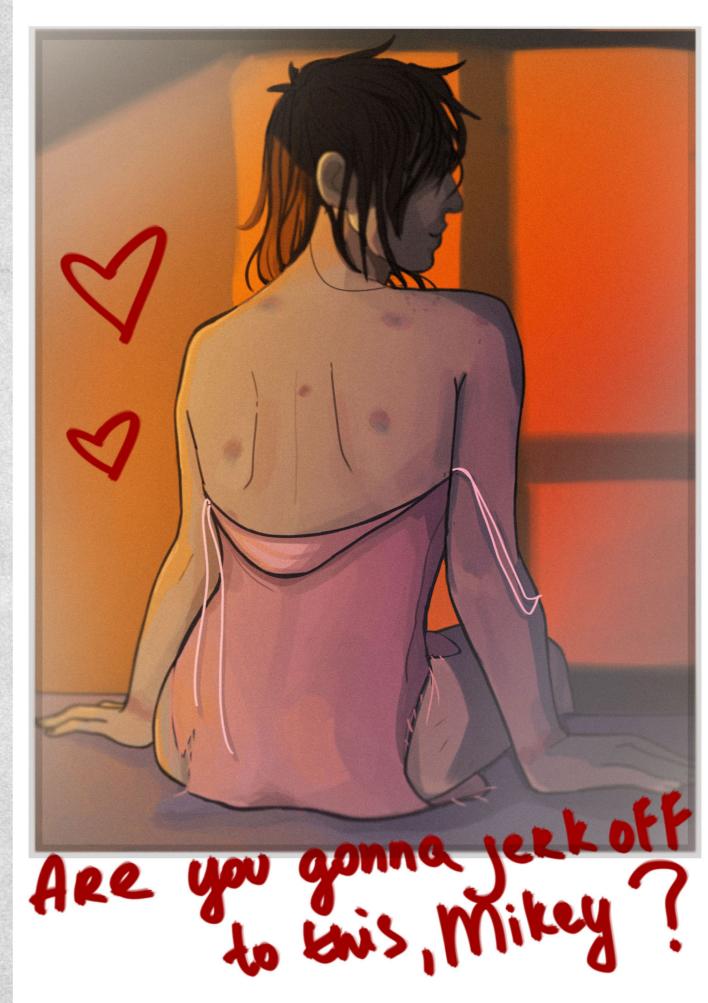


WITH LOVE AND DEDICATION, FROM THE FANDOM TO THE FANDOM.









You got my eyes thenomansland

"Don't you know you got my eyes?"

Michael thinks that, in actual fact, that's the stupidest question someone has ever asked him.

It would be reasonable coming from his mother (but she isn't here, he remembers) or his father (and wherever he is, he would prefer never to find out). Even from his grandparents, who he never really knew, not beyond the stories that his mother used to tell him in the good old days, back when he was a kid and they both slept in the same bed because she couldn't afford more than that after all the booze and the drugs and whatever shit his father decided to waste his night and money on.

But, oddly, the question comes from Trevor. It is rhetorical, irritating and probably—*actually* the weirdest thing he has ever heard him say. A surprise, now that he knows him as well as he does. Yet, his friend keeps that almost gentle and charming smile on his face. His brown eyes are staring at him, or at his *baby blues*, as he calls them, at least, like his eyes were something more than him, unreachable to both of them.

Now, that's scary, he thinks. Nevertheless, he remains silent for a few seconds more, wondering what's behind all of this. Is it *speed* this time? Maybe some other shit he hasn't even heard about in his life? That's Trevor. Amusing in his own way, if one wants to look at it like that. Which doesn't mean he doesn't care. If he had the power to do so, he would take him away from it all. He would show him that there's more than getting high every single time he feels miserable and lonely.

The truth is, Michael barely knows how that is.

"That's bullshit," he finally says, looking away for a moment.

"You got them."

"Look, T. If you're trying to make fun of me..."

"That's not it."

"Then what the fuck it's all of this?," it's his turn to ask, unpleasantly so. "You dragged me to this place in the middle of the night just to tell me that I got your eyes? Like you were my—my old man? Jesus."

"That's not it, Mike."

"Then tell me what is it!"

"Fuck, stop whining for once and use your fucking brain, Mikey. You complain too much and observe too little."

Trevor's palm slaps his right cheek softly, two times, trying to get his attention. It works. He is just too tired and he wants to go to bed as soon as Trevor would allow him to, so if he tries his best to show some interest in whatever his best friend has to say this time, then maybe he would leave him alone for the rest of the night.

"OK. Tell me then, why I got your eyes, T? How is that humanly possible for us?"

"Ah, there it is! Your stupid little brain works again, eh?"

"Don't make me regret it."

His friend nods, and then he sits closer to him on that old couch.

The place is something between hell itself and the most decent motel room Trevor ever got, or could afford. Again, and uncomfortably akin to his father, when there isn't too much shit messing with his head and his wallet (if he's even got one). Either way, the furniture surely is something he got from the trash, judging by the stains and the unbearable smell.

He notices that Trevor wants to stay there longer than he should, though he doesn't mention it out loud. It would make it worse than it has to be.

"It's not about the colors," Philips pronounces after thinking about it.

"Genius."

"It's about—It's about what one can find on them, you know?"

"And what's that?"

"Loneliness. Drugs. Some beers every morning. The bad places we come from. The unfulfilled dreams—"

Michael laughs.

"I didn't get that from you, T."

"No," he moves his head to one side. Then, when he seems bold enough, his eyes come back. "But there's something you got from me."

Trevor leans closer and Michael feels the need to run away. He's good at that, always has been. Running away from his parents, running away from home eventually, running away

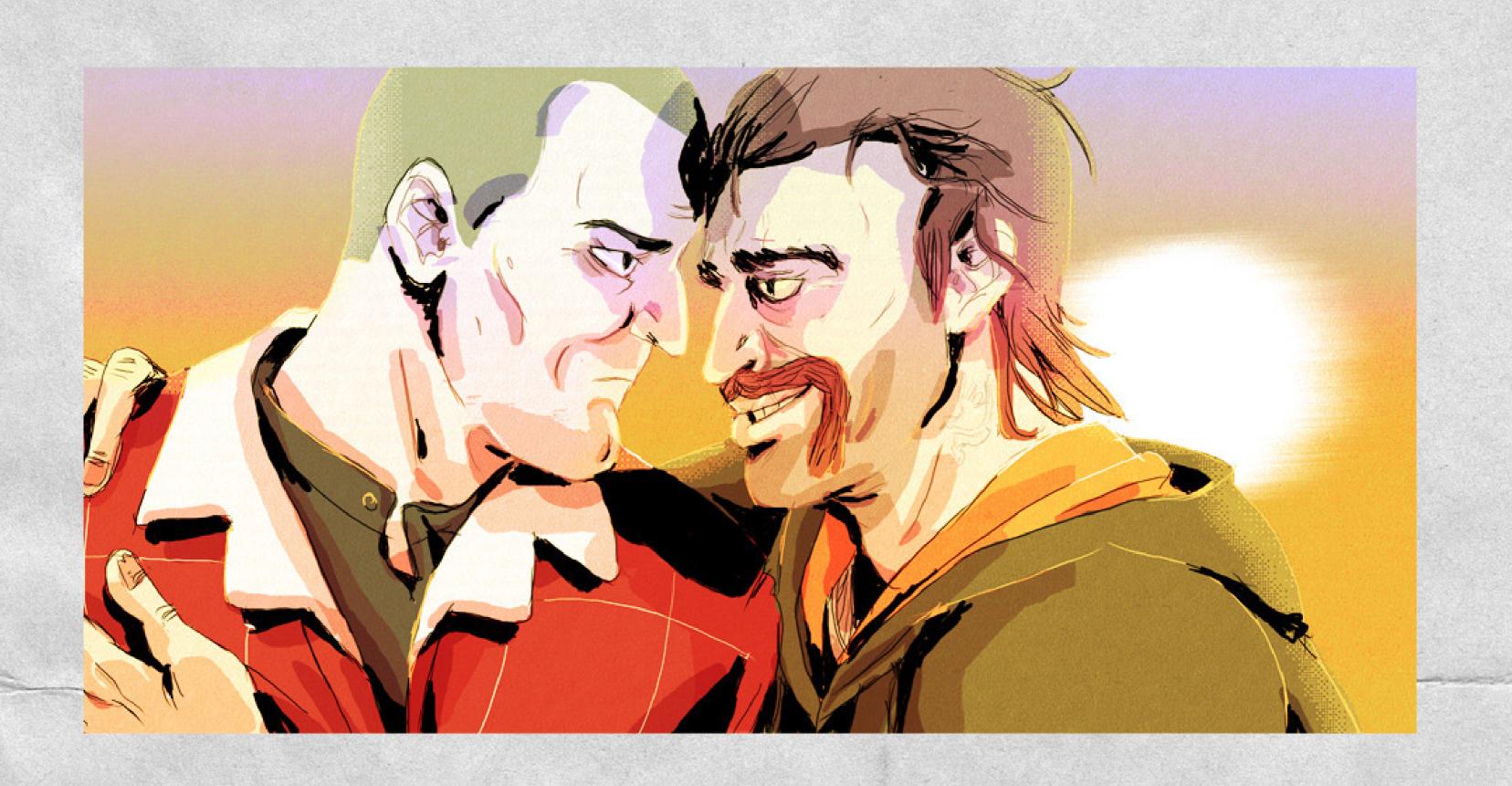
from the town that watched him grow after the disappointment he was meant to be there. Anyhow, he doesn't find the strength to say no to T when his lips brush his own so gently. He does find, on the contrary, a reason to agree and give him everything he could demand of him that night. They are young and stupid. They are some fucked up souls trying to heal so desperately and yet with so much hope.

Michael knows the word that Trevor's missing. He feels it in the taste of his warm mouth and takes it, so selfishly, from his tongue when they both touch that way, passion and fire and an acid drug he hasn't ever heard of in his life until this very moment.

L, o, v, e. Four letters to say more than words can. Four letters to settle something they are not meant to be. Ridiculous, whatever it means. Absurd.

"See? My eyes," his friend whispers with both of his arms around his neck, foolishly staring at him.

Michael realises that, in actual fact, that is the funniest way someone has ever told him that they're in love with him. And for the first time, so is he.



Paroles de J'aime

For Taylor trepidatingboarfetus

There are many ways to say *I love you* in just the English language alone and many more when other languages come into play, Michael knows, and it's such a stupid fucking phrase that's alluded him his whole life from his frigid fishly mother to his stone cold bastard of a father, so he can't even begin to understand why these silly three damn words affect him so much when Trevor says them so flippantly.

His heart painfully wrenches watching Trevor flirt antagonistically with Lester for the umpteenth goddamn time, telling him that he loves him whenever the ailing man tells them he has something good planned, something that can bring them in some actual bank for their wallets -- or in T's case, some support for his ever-growing crank habit.

He's unsure if it has less to do with the way Trevor snakes himself around Lester's fragile body with a laugh because he's always doing inane shit like that to everyone than more to do with the actual words themselves being uttered.

He rolls his eyes and sighs when T hugs his friendly neighborhood crystal supplier and tells him how much of a lifesaver he is and how much he loves him *so fucking much right now* while he's sticking wads of cash in the man's pockets without counting them. Michael is sure that he overpaid by a mile but also knows that at this point, his best friend has so much saved up that he doesn't care about the money. He doesn't do this shit for the cash. It's purely for the thrill.

(And Michael knows somewhere deep inside of the wall of denial he's built that Trevor has told him several times that he's only along for the ride because Michael keeps him entertained more than any drug could ever hope to do.)

He tries to laugh it off every time T blows kisses at women, and *hell*, even men, because he knows that Trevor doesn't really care about any of them. He likes to freak people out. It's a mind game thing with him. He wants to be perceived as weird and scary because he spent so much time being kicked around as a youth. Sometimes...sometimes it gets old though, and he wishes he'd grow the fuck up already.

He bristles angrily the night Trevor drunkenly puts his arm around Brad Snider and whispers that he thinks he loves him into his rapidly turning red ears, and that's it. Michael threatens to put Brad's miserable ass into a hole in the ground. He's pretty sure women everywhere will thank him for it, too.

It takes several people to pull him off Brad's shaking and beaten body, including Trevor who's hotly in his ear the entire time, asking him what his fucking problem is.

He looks at his fists as if they no longer belong to him.

Sure, he's hit people before, but not family. You don't turn on family. What the fuck is wrong with him? He feels like he's channeling his father right now, and it's not a pleasant place to be.

Someone pulls him away from the rest of the crowd into a janitorial closet back by the bathrooms of the bar, and he's not surprised to see that it's Trevor.

"What the fuck has gotten into you, Mikey?"

He looks down at his hands again, studying the wrinkles and finer details that mark them in the same vein as his father's DNA. They're meaty and hairy, sweaty at times, can palm a ball and fire both that and a gun with deadly accuracy, just like his old man. And can apparently beat the shit out of family, just like his old man.

But there's a sour milk taste in the back of his throat that makes him want to gag. Brad Snider's obnoxious ass has *never* felt like family.

He regards the tall, lanky barely man in front of him with his almost sometimes borderline splay of curvishness in places that make Michael tick, especially in the right clothes, sees the long brunette locks of hair framing his face and neck now -- a far cry from when they'd first met, and he'd still been trying to grow out his RCAF crew cut still.

Michael sees his big doe eyes and feels that no matter how furious they may be or no matter how fucking crazy this lunatic can get, Trevor's *his* fucking lunatic, and he's family. He'll *always* be family.

It hits him like a ton of bricks at 90mph then why those three words mean so much.

Trevor's never said them to him. Just like his sad sack father and his miserable mother. Never even got so much as an "I'm proud of you" or an "I love you" out of them even when he made All-State.

And Trevor shouts how much he loves the whole fucking world expect for one Michael Townley. Why is that? Doesn't he deserve to be loved, dammit??

As T is still going off half-cocked about jealousy and double standards, Michael squares his jaw and looks him dead in the eyes, and that stops the other man in his tracks slightly. It's not ever been a thing born of fear between them but of fascination, Michael knows, and of attraction.

"Why don't you ever tell me you love me, T?"

"H-huh?" the Canandian is taken by surprise. "What the fuck are you bitching about? Of

course I have."

Michael shakes his head and crosses his arms, rubbing the elbows for courage or security, he's not sure. "Nuh uh. Not one time, Trevor. You tell every other fucker on the planet including that sorry shitstain Brad, but me? Not even once," he laughs bitterly.

Trevor looks at him oddly for a while as if contemplating what he's said, and eventually it's as if an old lightbulb tries to flicker on inside his head, so he shakes it, grinning. "That's where you're wrong, sugar. I tell you every fucking day."

Michael wants to sputter and cry and lash out with everything he *is* and *has* because this has got to be the *most* delusional bullshit Trevor Philips has spewed yet, and sometimes he regrets ever running into this miserable bastard from up north who's made his life colder than a thousand Canadian winters could ever hope to be cold.

Before he gets the chance though, Trevor continues. "You see a pretty piece of ass? I stay by your side. I find you face down in muff? I stay by your side. You sometimes hurt me with words or actions like my old man used to hurt me, Mikey, and it's only you that I let hurt me so good, so just remember that when you say I don't love you. I didn't think it needed saying, but sure, I love you like no other," he finishes as he grounds his boot into the floor absentmindedly.

Suddenly all of the rage that has been building behind Michael's wall dissipates, leaving him feeling wondrously stupid and exhausted. When he looks up in Trevor's doe eyes again, he wonders how he could have ever doubted him, this beautiful creature before him, as he crushes Trevors lips to his.

And in this moment, he regrets *ever* having regretted meeting the loveliest chaos to shoot a flare into his heart, setting it wildly ablaze.





Blackmail Material T & M No. 78







Like a Snowflake Through the Fire

(Will you be here suffering? Well, I hope to be) trepidatingboarfetus

Winter in North Yankton was off to another cold, icy start, but you'd never catch Trevor complaining; no, he hated this fucking shit just as dramatically, if not more, as everyone else, and he didn't give the slightest fuck as to whence he'd strolled in from because it had absolutely no bearing on how well he could tolerate the weather, and he'd told his ragtag group of misfits that time and time again.

But Michael loved to especially rub his nose in the Canadian shit even though he'd spent *plenty* of goddamn time in the States as a teen too, even if it *was* a revolving door of states, and he'd really never gotten to stay longer than a few months in any one of them.

He knew it was all in good fun from his fuckbuddy friend, but there were times it was downright fucking tiring, and he really started to *believe* that Michael bought into that dumbass idea that Canadians had some sort of built-in superpower to withstand the cold.

The cold snap had come early this year, starting right before the bend into Halloween, and next to no one was prepared for it. Snow piled on top of mounds of leaves and mud as it had just rained heavily the week before the drastic drop in temperature. Some people hadn't yet put up gardening tools, still refusing to be done with the lazy days of summer.

Trevor walked through it all, admiring the crisp freshness while looking for his target, and he found him easily enough, overlooking a section of South Egg Creek by 12th Avenue where it pulled into a bit of pond and was a small section of park where the local kids would skate and play hockey when the weather was right enough for it. Michael's hands were clasped and sitting on his folded leg with his chin resting in the middle of it all, deep in thought.

Trevor knew why.

In about two more months, he'd be a father, and he knew that Michael felt he should be ecstatic, but his emotions felt out of place, and the man, himself, felt out of place. He knew his friend like he knew himself: neither one was cut out to be a regular Joe, muddling about at a 9 to 5, coddling the kids, fucking the missus with the lights off and pajamas on, and piddling off to bed to repeat the next day before Carson came on with the late show.

No, he knew Michael even if he didn't want to admit it to himself. He was sometimes long, pleasurable, drawn-out fucks in the back of alleyways when drunk at 4 am, whispering in ears, asking if that's how it's liked, one dirty talking motherfucker, begging to be called Mikey, Daddy, and everything in between while increasing speed and bringing both to completion with just a flick of his tongue, a suggestion in his voice, and a stroke of his wrist. During those times, Trevor felt desired.

Other times, he was a romantic and take-it-slow old school gentleman, just content to stroke Trevor's body and admire him till the end of time as if they were the only two who mattered in

the world. Those times, Trevor actually felt cherished.

And then there were the dark days where you didn't know where Michael's lust began, his anger ended, and vice versa. Those were the dangerous times where he was possessive and needy, and he could forget that Trevor was a person outside of him with needs too. He would drink too much, be too mad about something, and as of late, it was his predicament with Amanda, the former stripper-slash-hooker girlfriend he was currently shacked up with and pimping out. He was none too happy with approaching fatherhood, jokes thereof, any attempt at actually talking about it, and the whole nine yards, so Trevor had tried to lay low, but it didn't matter what he did.

Michael would seek him out like a dog sniffing out a bitch in heat when he wanted to...or worse, like a predator in the middle of bloodlust being alerted to the stench of fear of a wounded rabbit, and Trevor was always that little rabbit, eyes wide, just waiting and knowing what was coming.

And he couldn't entirely complain because a huge part of him enjoyed the hunt and what came after. He enjoyed how vicious Michael could get, and he wasn't stupid; he didn't need a shrink or Dr. Freud to tell him he had leftover Daddy issues along with a need to protect and love his mother. His Daddy issues were something slighter worse, something based more on craving love and affection from any man who could put up with his shit and put him back in his place. He was built to take a lot of abuse, fortunately or unfortunately, he wasn't sure. He just knew he could do it, and he enjoyed giving it as much as he could get it.

Maybe that's why his dumb ass kept coming back to find Mikey even after each argument, after each week that would go by, after times with no explanations, after the man he loved with his whole heart would find solace in soft curves, long hair, and sweet giggles repeatedly with no regard to his feelings.

He understood. Women were pretty, soft, and delicate. You wanted to protect them, love them, put them on a pedestal, and feel like their fucking hero out of a storybook. They had a habit of making you feel that way. And dammit, sometimes did *he* want to be that woman and make Michael feel that way.

But he also knew that during the dark spells, Michael didn't need something soft and gentle. He needed something as hard and built as him that couldn't fall apart so he could lash out when he needed so desperately to vent his frustrations.

And Trevor knew that's all the role he could ever hope to be.

He wasn't sure what Michael he'd get greeted with today. Sometimes he could see a mix of all three depending upon what kind of action they'd recently seen: if he and Amanda had another drag-out pissing match over what would be a space for the baby since there wasn't much to work with, if he'd fought with his recently acquired in-laws again for the umpteenth time because they always sided with their daughter, or if he'd attempted to try to tell his parents he was about to be a dad only to hang up the payphone again frantically. It could be anyone's

guess.

He watched as the wind ruffled bits of hair which Mikey had let grown long again because he hadn't bothered to get it lopped off with them pulling job after job for weeks on end, and he smiled in spite of himself because even if he thought he looked like sex on a stick no matter how he looked, he always did prefer his hair to be a little on the longer side, but he'd never admit that out loud. It gave him something to play with, to reach out and stroke affectionately, and to pull on passionately.

Daylight was quickly fading to dusk even though it was only 4:23 pm, and it was wiping away the bit of warmth the glow of the sun had brought with it. Adjusting his collar on his coat to make it slightly higher, Trevor went to announce himself, but his voice died in his throat when he looked at the face of his first love.

His eyes were cast towards the ground in despair, and his face wore a petrified mask of turmoil.

If anyone would follow in the footsteps of Jesus and allow himself to suffer more, Trevor supposed it would be Michael. He wasn't sure if he was supposed to be amused or annoyed by that thought.

He decided to come in with a gentle approach, let the rabbit sniff at the predator. Show the big bad wolf she means no harm to him. He began with rubbing his shoulders lightly through his coat even though he was sure his goddamn fingers were probably close to frostbitten by now because he refused to wear gloves wherever he went, but he ventured that maybe the simple friction would warm them up.

The big bad wolf startled and bared teeth. "What the -- who the fuck?"

He stood back and threw his frozen hands up in the air in a defensive posture trying to mimic something harmless. "Just me, Mikey. Was just looking for you, that's all."

"Did *she* fucking send you to look for me?" he bristled cantankerously. Oh good jolly fuck, he had been drinking quite a bit already apparently, so things were going to be very, *very* interesting in the ol' town tonight. "I don't need a fucking keeper."

He snorted at that thought. "When the fuck have I ever been your keeper, eh? Could swear it's usually the other way 'round." He slipped next to Michael on the bench.

That got a sharp chuckle out of Michael, and he leaned into Trevor's body but jumped back right after settling into him. "Sweet Jesus! Why the ever-living fuck are you so cold, Trevor?"

He laughed and cracked one of those piss-poor Canada jokes right back at Michael at his own expense. "Ah shit, I guess that Canadian secret winter power bullshit doesn't work, after all. What'd'ya know?" he finished with a huge smirk.

Michael's mind was lost to the joke though and instead was looking at his nearly frozen fingers. "T, what the fuck have we talked about with this whole concept of gloves and cold?"

Trevor settled back against the bench, faced heating up even if his fingers remained a slight hue of palish blue. "You have your fucking miserable racist jokes, I have my eccentricities."

"You're something else, T," he responded and then did the very last thing Trevor expected him to do.

A cold finger slid easily into his warm, squishy mouth, followed by another, and goddamn, the unholy groan that unleashed from Trevor couldn't be stopped because it had been weeks since he hadn't humped something that wasn't a pillow, makeshift hole, or his own pathetic hand. If he really calculated it in his head, the last time they'd had a chance to get together was a quick handjob in a gas station bathroom, but it hadn't accounted for shit in his mind because they hadn't even had time to really touch, to kiss, much less look each other in the eyes.

He had felt like his mother then afterward, a cheap whore, and he'd cried himself into a fitful sleep in his truck bed. Not far from the same spot he currently sat with his eyes transfixed on the mouth slowly playing magic tricks with his fingers, making them disappear behind the hot heat of his mouth while Trevor himself whined pitifully.

"Why?"

"Got to make your fingers warm," was the simple reply as if Michael was a former Boy Scout, and who knows, maybe that was another secretive part of him that only belonged to him that Trevor would never know while *he* spilled positively *everything* about himself with no shame.

But boy, oh boy, the way Michael's tongue danced sinfully around his fingers...there could be nothing Boy Scoutishly moral in the way he did *that*.

Trevor whined again and hissed with need. Just a few measly seconds on this frigid bench and Michael had the tables turned. Now *he* was the suffering one, dammit. "Mikey, *please*."

Michael popped a solitary blue eye open and gazed deeply into his. There was something taunting, spirited, boyish, and maddening just in that single action. Innocent but not really. "Please *what*?" he said from around a mouthful of fingers the same way a person would say with a mouthful of Nanaimo during a family get-together.

Trevor just stared back at him, both in shock and irritation. "Are you serious? It's been weeks. Don't make me beg, holy fuck."

He withdrew each finger from his mouth, and Trevor began to protest at the lack of heat

until Michael pulled his zipper down a bit and guided Trevor's arms into his coat.

Nope, he wasn't about to complain as this was a rare opportunity to snuggle close, and he was going to run with it. There weren't too many of these days coming, he could smell that fire on the horizon as he gladly shoved his freezing digits up and under Michael's warm armpits and reveled in the body heat they produced before he leaned his head into his chest.

Michael peered out and over him without really meeting his eyes. "I *like* hearing you beg. No one's ever begged for me in my life like you do. No one *needs* me like you."

Trevor felt his breath catch. Was that what he thought it was? Were his ears playing tricks?

"You...good, Mikey? You know we can cut and run anytime you want. I go where you go."

Michael relaxed visibly somewhat at that admission. "Nah, I'm good. Just the jitters, ya know?" And then his long-suffering eyes returned to Trevor's. "But sometimes, I wonder...."

Trevor wondered too. He wanted to speak up and tell Michael that they could take their chances anywhere doing the same things they were already doing but without pregnant newlywed hormonal wives and bitchy in-laws, that they could go out west where it was OK to be themselves, that no one would care or pay them any mind. That Michael could be free of his suffering in silence, and so could he. They could both just *be*.

But during the gloom of winter, it seemed too farfetched and unattainable to be happy, like none of them were deserving of that fake life. It was all just pretend.

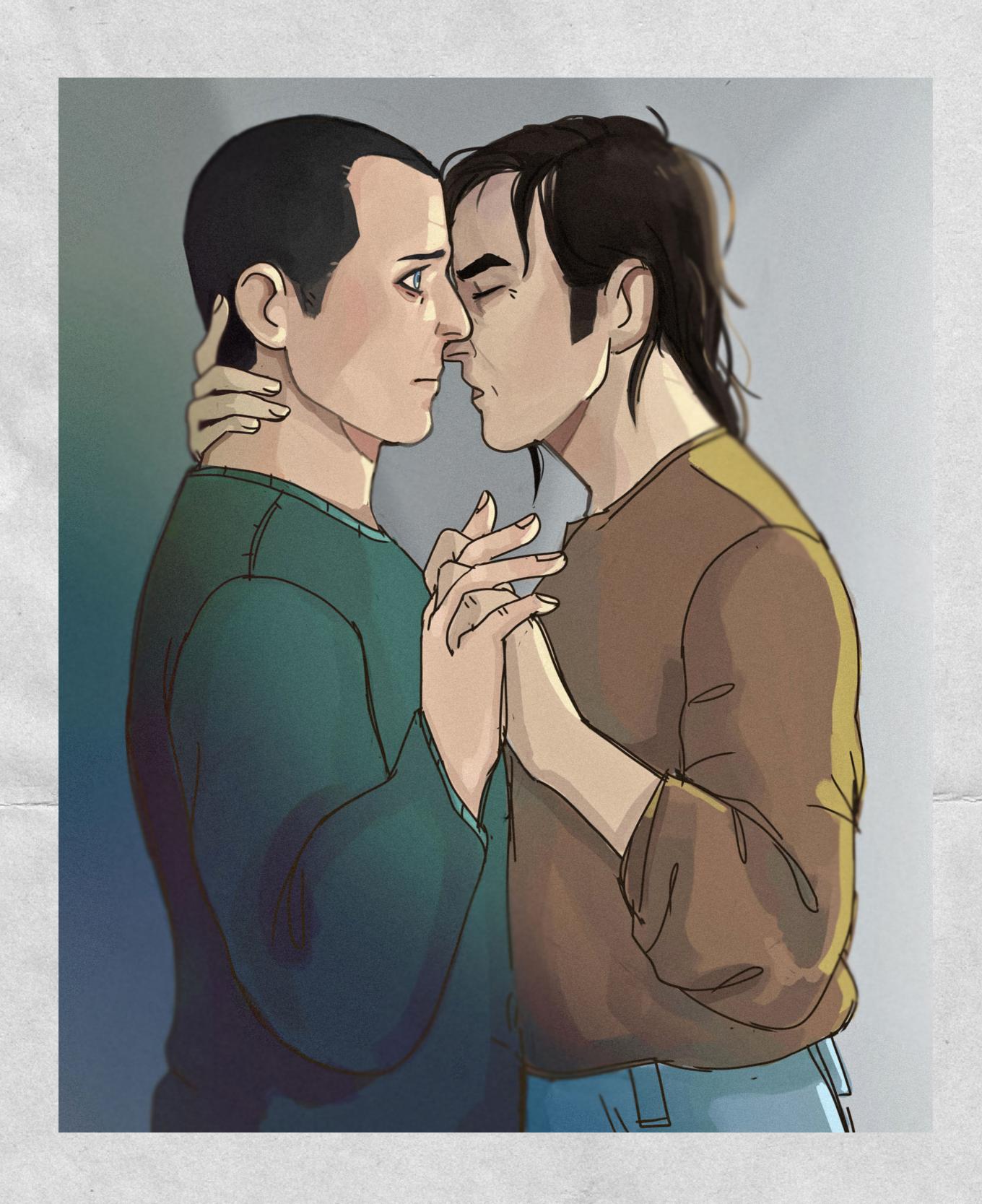
The best he could hope for was that his life was miraculously short and that he was forever frozen next to Michael's side, etched in his memories because that's all he really wanted to be. Not much else mattered in the end. He didn't want to stay pretending. It was too fucked up, and he didn't do this emotions game all that well.

He blew out a long sad sigh and looked up at the encroaching stars littering the newly-formed night sky. He tried telling the truth. "I'm suffering."

Beautiful eyes turned down at him followed by a sultry grin. "Aw, I guess I need to do something about that, don't I?"

And they left to make something better and happier at that moment and the many other moments following that, but in the back of Trevor's mind, he knew where they all would lead eventually, and he knew he'd always find them both returning to this park, sitting on this bench, suffering until both would eventually part and go make their own way in the world.

AN: Nanaimo bars are a Canadian dessert. <3 The title comes from a really sad song that inspired this sorrowful mess pre-Tracey mess, I'm sorry. :(It's called "Suffering" by The War On Drugs.



Whiskey, Nostalgia, and Bobby Vinton

For Marina trepidatingboarfetus

It was at this moment Michael knew, he had fucked up. Majorly.

Warms arms curled around his back, stroking soothingly along to the sounds of Bobby Vinton crooning in the background about loves being meant forever, pleading to be listened to and never forgotten.

Michael loved this song. It was one of his parents' favorites, and he was pretty sure he could recall someone mentioning it once during his childhood that his mom and pop had danced to it at their wedding. It was a connection to nicer, sweeter times in his mind. Even when it played on the record player at home as a kid, he could recall the fondness in his old man's eyes for his mom even if it wasn't there the remainder of the time.

Maybe that's why this song was currently his undoing. They had all been drinking at Lester's house, celebrating the approaching holidays while waiting on getting paid. Michael had places to be, of course. He had a not too happy wife he needed to get off his back with two very young kids at home expecting presents, and he still needed to go shopping and make this something for them all to remember, so when Snider had pulled out the cheap whiskey, he had rolled his eyes but taken the shots offered because he was getting more and more anxious by the minute sitting there.

And then someone had flicked on the radio and tuned it into the only thing that would come in at Lester's house that wasn't talk radio or country: the local oldies station. Much to Trevor's chagrin. He had complained and yammered impatiently through every fucking song until Michael had unwittingly spoken up when Bobby Vinton came on, said that he loved Please Love Me Forever, and wished he could dance to it as his once parents did.

Trevor had stood up and taken him in his arms without saying a word while everyone else watched on, amused and still pouring shots.

His best friend currently stood across from him, eyes closed tightly as if nervous, gliding one hand gently up his back to hold his neck gracefully while taking Michael's other hand in his to dip him in time to the music. When they came back up, Trevor's lips were so dangerously close to his, he couldn't help but stare and felt the heat rushing to his face.

Trevor's breath was near enough he could smell the beer and found himself craving a taste. He licked his lips.

Thanks to being pressed together and having their bodies and limbs so entangled, he could feel that his friend was definitely having some reaction...from the dancing, being so close to another person, or because of something else...well, he wasn't sure.

And unfortunately for him, so was he.

He tried to remember the rosary from childhood but had way too much whiskey-brain going on for that, so he tried to focus on his breathing.

Thanks to Bobby, he couldn't stop thinking about the man in front of him now, all of the times they'd shared over the short amount of time they'd known each other, and he couldn't imagine a time without having Trevor in his life now. Some days, he was happier to see the man before him than he was seeing his own wife at home, and he wasn't sure why that was.

The song slowly came to an end, and Trevor's eyes opened, gazing lazily back into his. Bedroom eyes, that's what they called it in the old movies.

As soon as the last note played, the grasp the song had on Michael faded away, and he felt his feet move before his mind shifted with them, so he was perplexed when he found himself huffing and puffing outside of Lester's, next to his car.

He busied himself with searching for his keys, praying he didn't leave them inside. The presents, the money -- ALL of it...it could all wait another fucking day.

The song's lyrics filled his mind hauntingly.

I'll love you forever, can't forget you ever....

Goddamn it, the song was forever ruined to him now. He'd gone and fucked it up by falling hopelessly in love with Trevor Philips, and now he was asking for trouble.

Our love was meant to be....

Find me

in the dark before dawn

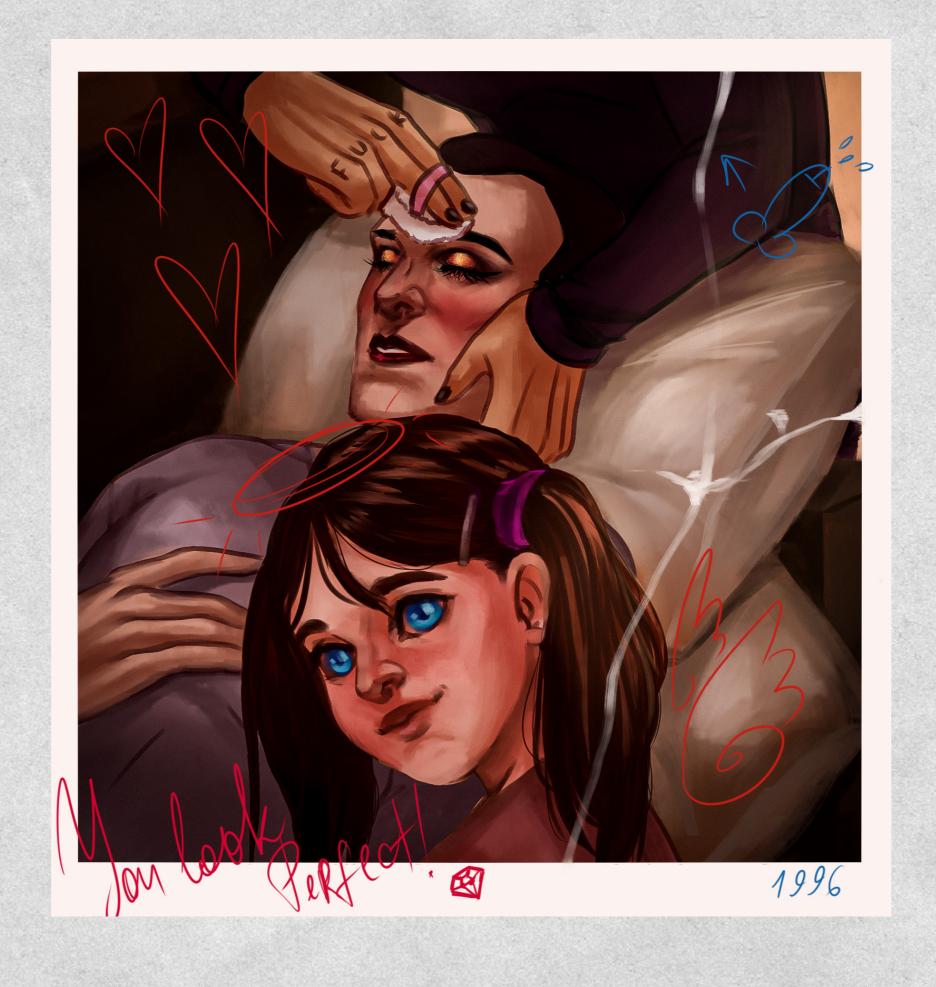
for I am gone

with the first touch of morning

save your tears

through you I became the warmth of the sun

Michael Townley 1965-2004





White Winter Hymnal

trepidatingboarfetus

I was following the pack, all swallowed in their coats
With scarves of red tied 'round their throats
To keep their little heads from falling in the snow
And I turned 'round and there you go
And Michael, you would fall and turn the white snow red
As strawberries in the summertime

These plans were built to go off without a hitch; "no fuss, no muss" as Michael was often fond of saying as he'd slap Lester while the bespeckled man would sputter and bitch but blush just the same each time, and this one was supposed to go that way too, but something was raising the hackles on the back of his neck and had been ever Michael had uttered the words, "Slow and steady, T, slow and steady."

The cash collection was taking forever, and Michael had never dicked around so much in his life -- except maybe with him, he thought miserably. Michael also wasn't usually so sloppy but had allowed some two-bit old rent-a-cop fuck to pull off his ski mask and make him, and the fucking kicker was watching him use one of those god-awful movie lines he loved so much from that one damn director he'd had a raging hard-on for since forever.

It was about that time that he'd started to realize he'd been pushing Mikey too hard, too much. He really was sounding like he was done, and it was tearing at what rotten lumps combined to form Trevor's heart -- or at least he told himself that's what his heart was.

Maybe everyone needed a vacation. Maybe he and Brad needed to do some shit together, leave Michael alone.

Ah, but that was tearing at him too. He didn't *want* to do *shit with Brad*. He wanted to do *shit with Mikey*, just like the old days before that bitch had come in and demanded his balls.

The next thing he knew, the old fat fart was pointing a gun in Michael's face, and all he could see was red. Yeah, that asshole was shivering in his two sizes too tight uniform now, probably about to piss or shit himself, and let him! How *dare* anyone put a gun to Michael Townley's head! He'd show that fucking prick what psycho means!

But Mikey as always was trying to calm the situation, and there just wasn't any fixing this fucking mess, couldn't he *see* that?? This bastard was trying to take him down, just like these wannabe heroes always tried, and he wasn't going to allow that to happen!

And BAM. Just like that, the old man went down, but there were no offers of thanks for Trevor or praise for a job well done. He couldn't remember the last fucking time he'd heard the words leave Michael's mouth even, and his face slowly turned from a jaded snarl into a wistful frown. He thanked his lucky ass that no one could see behind the mask and proceeded to follow onward with the rest of his ragtag crew who looked more like they were dressed for a day of shoveling the previous night's arctic dumpings, not a fucking robbery, swallowed in their winter gear as they all were.

Another loud explosion shook the place, followed quickly by sirens, and anger consumed him briefly as he wondered aloud who fucking had the audacity to snitch. Thoughts went straight to the new kid who was driving, but truthfully, he was probably too scared shitless to do much harm because he'd been too worried about being labeled as an accomplice, and Lester was automatically off the fucking table because Lester was about as anti-establishment as Trevor, himself, got.

That left Brad and Mikey, and his mind wouldn't even entertain that last thought. Brad was fucking stupid enough, yes, for a bigger cut or if somehow someone had made him sing, but *Michael*?

His heart thumped erratically in his chest. No time like the present to bleed out some anxiety on some fucking cops.

Bullets flew everywhere, banging loudly off metal cars and concrete buildings, and the ringing replaced the thumping in his ears, but it was a welcome change. He didn't want to think, he just wanted to do right now. The heartbreaking action of trying to actually figure out what had gone wrong here could come much later with Lester at hand to hold him back from fucking up the face of whomever the fuck had done or said what.

Or Lester could keep watch over him in the aftermath after he'd have to break his own heart if...if....

He pushed that thought away again.

It was Brad. Or maybe he was just overthinking shit. He did tend to jump the gun sometimes, go off the rails...OK, so he could get a little crazy and particular about how things were handled. Didn't everyone when it came to a job?

They'd lucked out by the grace of their nuts, and the kid they'd hired to drive hadn't flaked out and sped off. He followed his pack of fellow eager entrepreneurs by the sounds of their footfalls crunching in the snow and hurried towards the SUV.

The heater barely budged in the fucking piece of shit, but at least they were alive, and all in one piece, although Michael was moving like an old man. He barked at him to get the fuck in there, nearly asked him what the fuck was the holdup, and to shake the

lead out because they needed to go and go now.

And of course, Brad was straight to his afterparty yammering about scared bitches, how massive his shriveled cock was, and it thundered in Trevor's ears like an avalanche.

"Bahbahbahbahbahbahbah!" he yelled, trying to drown out the waves of annoying sound and the feeling of impending doom, but he couldn't rest even a single goddamn minute before the blare of sirens were next to them, crawling up alongside their window. He cursed at himself, at his life, at the fucking stupid state of North Yankton, at whoever's miserable ass had ratted them out, at that stupid smirking sexy hockey coach who'd said he would've had *so much more potential* if he'd just bent his knees a little more before Trevor'd shown him how much potential he could have on the business end of that hockey stick, and finally at whatever beings there were upstairs or downstairs that were torturing him currently before he broke his window and hung himself halfway out it, firing at them.

The sound of gunfire plagued him again, things whirring and buzzing by his head, and he tried to mentally count to twenty-five, thirty, *anything* just to concentrate on something while he aimed because counting had always been a soothing task for him, but the next thing he knew, the fucking driver had a hole in his head where you could see out the other side. They had just a *slight* problem....

Before he could even say anything, Michael jumped into action as if he'd risen from the great beyond where thieves and cons go, pushed the kid out of the car, hopped into the driver's seat, and rammed the police vehicle all in one swift fluid motion. And Trevor watched it all and whooed so hard, he thought he nearly nutted there in the suburban because it was fucking astounding to behold. Michael at his highest excellence was a work of art worthy of being stashed at and stolen from the Louvre.

He reminded them that they needed to hurry to the chopper, and they had to be quicker than the train to do so. Something deep inside him urged him onwards, willed him to hurry Michael, to pick up speed because something in his gut just didn't feel right still even though everything was starting to look on the up and up.

However, those hopes were slowly dashed, one by one. He'd truly wanted to believe they weren't made when those two flew by, but then he saw the roadblock and felt his heart sink straight into his asshole, left there throbbing painfully as he frantically ordered Michael to turn right to avoid them, but he didn't account for the goddamn train being *right there* or that the damn thing would clip the end of them.

Or that they'd smack right into a fucking tree.

No, nothing about the damn thing was going according to plan. It all suddenly stunk, but it wasn't the first time he or Michael'd had to rethink and regroup. Wouldn't be the last, he supposed as he waited for his head to stop pounding.

Mikey's voice came through the bursts of sound, just enough, that he could hear him grunt softly, "You guys all right?"

He shook his head and opened the door with a resounding, painful, "Fuck! C'mon, ditch the car, all right? We can go this way to the chopper." And he walked away, expecting his crew to follow because when a plan was FUBARed, it just was, and they had to think on their feet. Brad knew it; he was starting to come out of the vehicle and cross over to him. Michael knew it too. Right?

Right?

"No! Hey! Stick to the plan."

Except apparently, he didn't know. Not anymore.

He turned around and looked at the man he'd called best friend, brother, and had even dared to sometimes call *something else* that he didn't dare utter lest Mikey would run off in fear over the years, and he wondered if he was hearing him right. Surely that was it. The gunfire, the nasty migraine he had rearing its ugly head, the deafening sounds coming from everywhere looking to drive him insane...that had to be affecting him, and he was just misunderstanding him.

"What?"

Michael gave him a look he didn't think he'd often seen in their time together, and it was usually reserved for times when he was pretty fucking pissed off by or disgusted with Trevor. His lips curled in disdain, and his eyes flashed angrily. "Stick to the fucking plan, come on."

He wanted to reach out and shake him, ask him what the fuck was wrong with him. Why the fuck wouldn't they alternate their course like they'd always done in the past when the heat was pouring on? Why was he doing this? Did he have some sort of fucking deathwish??

But instead, he sighed and swallowed his words, followed his pack. Because that's what they all did. They stayed together.

Their feet crunched easily through muddied driven-upon snow as they walked down some forgotten side street of Ludendorff where the houses were mostly old and worn down relics now. Brad was not surprisingly the first to complain about the chopper and lack of it, and Trevor knew it was because Brad had never been built for jobs that require much walking or running. He wasn't a former fucking athlete like Michael had been or just in some sort of decent shape like himself. Brad was in a shape, all right, but not the right one.

What Mikey's plastic titty pole dancer had ever seen in Brad was beyond his comprehension. Trevor preferred guys built like Roman gods, personally. Guys like the one currently strolling alongside him.

God, he really needed to keep his head in the fucking game.

And as soon as he thought that, the sound of thunderous fire from a rifle ripped through the air. A bullet sliced straight through bitching Brad like he was butter, and as he watched him hit the ground with a sickening force that he shouldn't have, it dawned on Trevor that the damn thing could've easily hit him. He could've been lying in that street just now. Dammit, dammit.

His heart leaped into his throat at that thought and settled back down into his chest, racing like an old 409 Chevy engine. His mind kicked into gear, and he shouted at Michael as he ran for cover, "Run! It's the fucking Feds!" And the notion hit him again, coming in waves of sorrow and boiling fury. "Someone must've fucking talked."

But Brad was shot, so who the fuck talked? Who, Trevor?

He didn't like the way his brain was speaking to him, slipping in suggestive shit at the base of his skull like some sort of slithering snake.

For whatever reason, Michael was looking over Brad's wound and declaring him OK even though there was so much blood, Trevor's mind was whispering to him that Brad was *anything but*, and even then, his heart spoke clearly that Michael deemed him OK for a fucking reason so *just listen to Michael goddammit*.

His ears and head were ringing with so many sounds, his head was a pounding mess of a blizzard, and there was so much snow everywhere. On the ground, in the air, in his brain, in his heart....

Michael was saying something about needing to get the fuck out of there. Yes, that...that was the only thing that made any kind of sense through the muck and mess, so he reached through the veil of haze to grab at it.

Then another shot pierced through the wall.

Nononononono.

He turned around from where he was crouching and watched everything happen as if it were in slow motion. In his eyes, the bullet tore through Michael, and he fell backward into the pure white snow, tainting it red with the blood from his hands, and he wasn't sure how much of it was his and how much of it was Brad's, but his stomach lurched violently. His body fought with the desire to puke, and his heart cried out to his beloved la-

ying on the cold ground.

Everything was red, so very much red, and all he could think of when he closed his eyes were the wild strawberries he'd often picked and eaten as a boy, growing in the fields behind the trailer park. Red like strawberries.

He didn't think he'd be eating strawberries ever again. He gulped his vomit back down.

Michael was trying to tell him to leave, *why* was he telling him to go? Didn't he know he could never leave his side? He'd rather die by his side than live a half-life without him. It was no life at all.

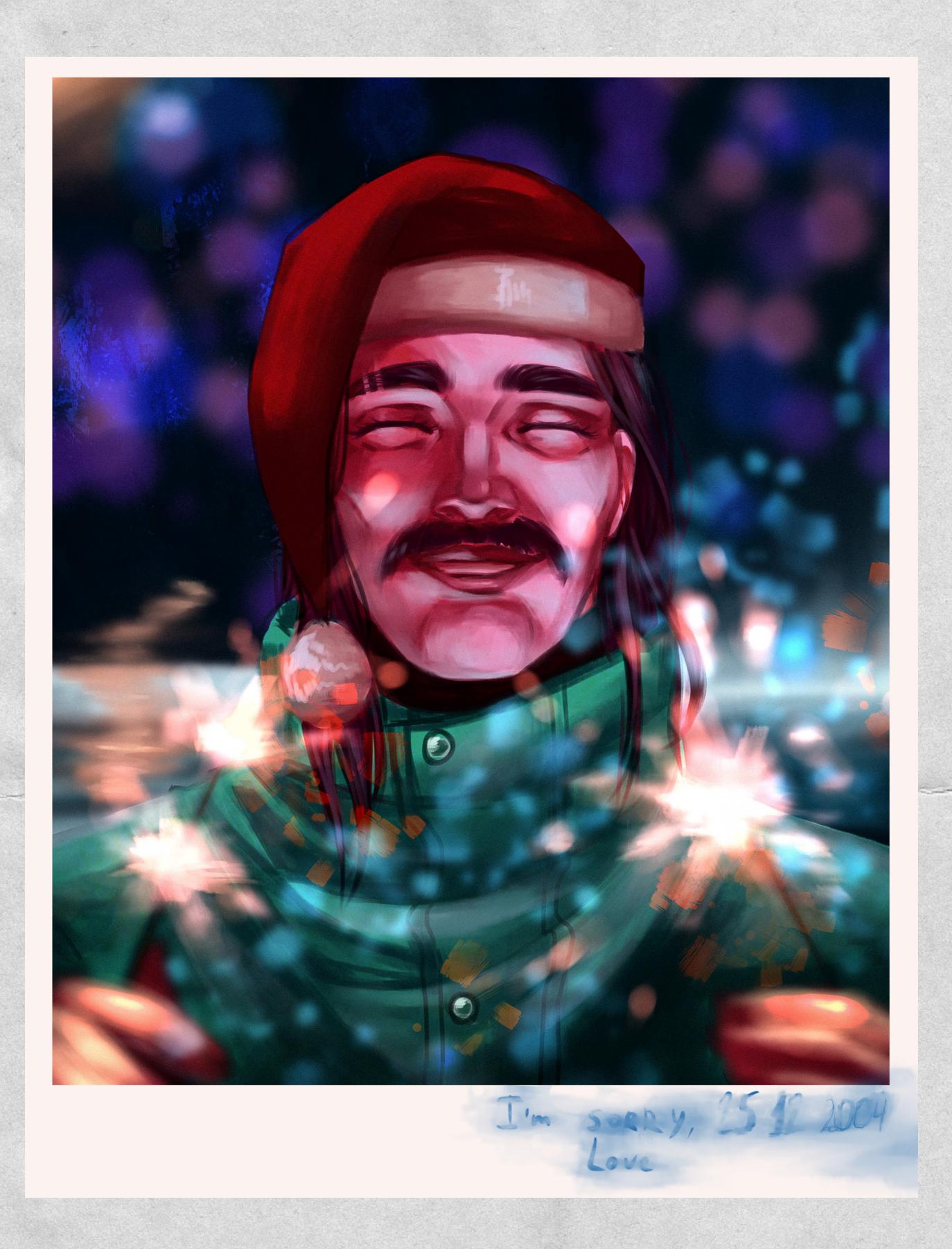
When he heard the words *bleed out* leave Michael's mouth as more police pulled up, he saw red again. And he kept seeing red, no matter if he closed his eyes or kept them open. Red was rage. He could do rage. Rage felt good.

And eventually, he trudged through the roaring blizzard, letting it carry his legs away and embrace him with its comforting sounds of whiteout nothingness. It was better than hearing the only man he'd ever loved last words spoken to him gently and repeatedly in his head. It was better than hearing his muffled tears in the wind. It was better than hearing a huge piece of his crooked soft heart finally fall off and die.

He'd never complain about noise again. Not when he'd need it to drown out the ones left behind.

AN: White Winter Hymnal belongs to Fleet Foxes.





Hell Is Living Without You

aintgonnaleaveyoumikey

Michael parked the car in front of the familiar motel, his breath visible in the cold air and fingers feeling like they could fall off any moment. Yet he didn't go in, just stared at the door of the room where he knew Trevor was waiting for him.

He wasn't the type to cry, but now he was closer to it than he had been since the day Tracey was born. He had needed to get away from home, but he didn't really feel like he could deal with Trevor and his energy either — but ultimately, it came down to the fact that he didn't find it in him to blow Trevor off. Again.

So he decided to suck it up: he got out of the car and made his way to the room, and like usual, Trevor had left the door unlocked. He opened it to find Trevor waiting on the bed, only wearing his boxers. He was leaning back on his elbows, rising a bit to greet Michael.

"Fucking finally. I was starting to think you weren't coming," Trevor noted with a slight smirk.

Michael closed the door, locking it. Then he turned around to look at Trevor, but instead of joining him like usual, he just leaned on the door and rubbed his face. Maybe he shouldn't have come here, after all.

He watched the smirk on Trevor's face die down. "Hey, T," he greeted quietly, feeling like shit for having that effect on Trevor's mood.

"Something wrong, Mikey?" Trevor asked, looking at Michael carefully, and Michael could see his body getting tense.

He still looked gorgeous lying on the bed like that. His lean body looked enticing, and Michael got lost in his thoughts; he could just get in bed and lose himself in Trevor, instead, for the night. He could do that and ignore everything else for a while. But his head felt slow, not sharp like usual, and moving felt impossible.

"Mikey?" Trevor asked again, more urgently, rising even more.

"... Yeah. Yeah. I'm fine. Kinda," Michael sighed and rubbed his face again, trying to get his thoughts together.

"Kinda?"

Michael didn't answer.

"You look like shit," Trevor continued, now getting up from the bed. He walked to Michael who didn't have the energy to give a sarcastic reply, not even his usual annoyed glare, and

that's when Trevor truly started to look alarmed. "M? What's going on?"

They stared at each other for a long while, and Michael couldn't take it anymore. Couldn't keep pretending to be strong and unaffected when those brown eyes bore into his.

"I'm just really fucking *tired* of everything, T," Michael choked out, feeling tears of pure exhaustion in his eyes. He fought to keep eye contact for long enough just to see Trevor blinking at him in surprise, but his vision blurred with tears, and he had to avert his gaze in embarrassment at admitting any sort of weakness.

Immediately, he felt Trevor's arms wrapping around his waist. It wasn't their first hug by far, but it felt more meaningful, more real than their previous ones. Michael pulled Trevor, warm and feeling like literal heaven, closer and buried his face in Trevor's neck, trying to stop the tears. He just barely managed. He took deep breaths, inhaling Trevor's smell, hand desperately clutching his back.

His legs felt weak, and he unwillingly slumped down a bit; Trevor's strength and the door were the only things keeping him on his feet. He hadn't felt this cared for in ages, maybe never.

"Just tired, Mikey?" Trevor murmured in his ear after a while, lips brushing his earlobe, and the simple act felt so good, and Trevor's presence so intimate, that Michael wanted to never let go of Trevor. And even though the thought scared him a bit, he pushed the fear away.

"Yeah. I just..." He trailed off when he felt Trevor shivering, probably because of the cold hands and clothes pressing against his skin. "You *idiot*, you're gonna freeze." He put his hands on Trevor's shoulders and gently pushed him, trying to keep him at arm's length.

But Trevor's hands found his face. "I don't give a fuck," he answered and leaned in to press a kiss on Michael's lips, and Michael was too tired to resist, but he didn't have time to kiss back before Trevor murmured, "Take off your clothes, and let's get to bed."

Trevor pulled away from him, and Michael rubbed his eyes quickly, grimacing. "Listen, Trev, I'm sorry, but I don't think I could even get it u—"

"Jesus, Mikey, what do you take me for?" Trevor rolled his eyes. "You are gonna take a well-deserved nap, my friend."

"Oh." Michael breathed out, surprised but relieved. "But... But you don't seem tired."

"Nah, I'm not. But don't you worry about that, I'll just keep myself entertained by watching you sleep," Trevor grinned and started taking off Michael's coat.

Michael chuckled weakly and stood up straight to give Trevor space to take off his coat and shirts. Michael toed off his shoes and opened his belt. "But it's not really *us time* if I'm just here to sleep," he said, kicking off his pants and socks.

Trevor opened his mouth but then closed it; he led Michael to bed, staying silent until Michael was spooned against him, and the covers shielded them from the outside world.

"Just sleep, Sugar, you clearly need it," Trevor whispered against Michael's neck.

Michael sighed, thankful and relaxed despite the fact that he would have never *asked* to be cuddled like this — his pride wouldn't have allowed that — but Trevor seemed to know that this was what he needed right now.

It didn't take long for sleep to take over when Trevor was holding him so tightly, keeping him safe.

When he woke up, Trevor was still holding him, caressing his belly soothingly in small, circular movements. Michael hummed and turned his head towards Trevor as much as he could.

"Morning, sleepyhead," Trevor sneered sarcastically but pressed a kiss on his jawline. Michael huffed in both amusement and pleasure.

"Hey," he croaked, opening his eyes a bit. The room was dark, only street lights peeking through the curtains allowing him to see anything. "Fuck, how long did I sleep?"

"A few hours," Trevor murmured, but Michael had a feeling it was a lot longer than that.

"Fuck. I'm sorry."

"What for?" Trevor grunted softly, pressing his lips against Michael's neck.

"For being such a fucking wreck," he groaned, embarrassed, turning his head away.

Trevor snorted. "You're not a wreck, Mikey, and believe me, *I* know wrecks. You feeling better?"

"Much better," Michael answered honestly, even though he was still tired. He closed his eyes again. "Haven't slept this long without interruptions since... Fuck, I don't even know when. You're like fucking magic, T."

"Glad to be of service," Trevor answered, a hint of amusement in his voice.

"You really are," Michael sighed. "Listen, I'm sorry I've blown you off a few times these past months. It's been rough at home." Michael pressed closer to Trevor, who was now running his hand down Michael's side, fingers twirling slowly on his hip bone before moving down, caressing his thigh, and then going back up. Michael almost moaned, it felt so good.

"... Yeah?" Trevor prompted.

"... Yeah. Tracey and Amanda both got the flu so I was taking care of them. And Jimmy, too. He's started having these nightmares," he mumbled. "He refuses to go to sleep and keeps waking up at night. It's been fucking awful."

"Fuck," Trevor grunted. "You could have asked me to come and help you out."

"Yeah, well. Amanda." She didn't like Trevor hanging around, so when Michael insisted on Trevor visiting the kids, she usually went to her sister's place for the day. It was a solution that just about worked. "I mentioned it to her, but she didn't wanna have you around when she was sick."

Trevor groaned in answer. "Her fucking pride."

"Probably, yeah," Michael muttered quietly because he truly had no right to criticize anyone's pride. "And man, she was pissed off when I came here, but I just had to get away now that she got better. She's gonna fucking tear me a new one when I get back home."

Trevor grunted in sympathy, clearly annoyed with her, and they fell silent.

Michael tried to push away thoughts of her and instead enjoyed the closeness: Trevor's body was pressed against his tightly and his fingers were brushing on his nipple. It made him sigh in pleasure, and he felt Trevor's cock hardening against his ass through the thin layers of clothing they were wearing. Instinctively, he pressed against Trevor's erection, and Trevor responded by kissing his neck, sucking lightly.

Michael was quickly getting hard, too, now that he had slept away the worst of his exhaustion. The feeling of Trevor's tongue and lips on his neck and then earlobe made him moan, and Trevor sucked on it as he moved his hand to Michael's belly, then cupped his cock through his underwear.

"God, yes," Michael sighed, thrusting lazily against Trevor's hand while Trevor grinded against him.

"See, you could get it up after all," Trevor huffed out a laugh against his ear.

Michael grunted. "That's only thanks to you, T. I'm still pretty tired."

"Then just lay back, and let me take care of you," Trevor murmured and pulled his hand away from under Michael's head, prompting Michael to turn on his back as Trevor got on his knees between Michael's legs. The covers slid off of them, but neither of them was cold anymore so they didn't care.

Michael lifted his legs as Trevor took off his boxers, fingers lightly brushing his cock in the process, making Michael push against his hand.

"Impatient." Trevor grinned and threw the final piece of Michael's clothing on the floor before taking off his own. For a while, they both just looked at each other, both naked and eager.

Michael's cock twitched, but Trevor didn't give him what he wanted just yet. He ran his hands up Michael's thighs and hips before leaning in to kiss him. Michael grunted as his cock, standing almost fully hard against his stomach, pressed against Trevor's.

The kiss was slow and intimate, and Michael's hands found Trevor's neck as he groaned in pleasure. "Trev," he sighed against the warm lips and thrust up against Trevor.

He felt Trevor smile. "Just relax, darling," Trevor whispered, caressing the stubble Michael hadn't had time to shave.

Darling. That was new. Sometimes he was *Sugartits* or *Porkchop* but never anything as affectionate as *darling*. Michael blushed and gave Trevor a small nod, keeping his eyes closed as Trevor kissed his neck, then his chest, before moving down and wrapping his lips around his cock.

Michael moaned as Trevor rolled his tongue around the head, then sucked. His hands found the back of Trevor's head, but not to push him down aggressively like usual: he just took a hold of Trevor's long hair, eliciting a moan from him, but let him continue without interrupting his pace.

It was slower and considerably more gentle than usual; so unlike them, but so good that Michael couldn't keep quiet, especially when Trevor teased him with his tongue while moving his head up and down. His grunts and moans filled the room.

Trevor used his hand as well, jerking Michael off slowly when his mouth focused on the tip of his cock, but each time he lowered his head, Michael's cock slid in a bit deeper.

"Jesus!" Michael choked out as Trevor eventually took his whole length in his mouth and cupped his balls. "Jesus fucking Christ, Trev...!" His eyes shot open, and he looked at Trevor, gasping at the feeling and the sight.

Trevor winked at him, and Michael let out a breathy laugh. *Bastard*. He continued bobbing his head up and down, and the wetness of his mouth and his talented movements made Michael thrust up slightly.

But Trevor pulled away to gasp for air, palming Michael's cock and rolling his thumb over the sensitive head. Michael watched Trevor's wet lips in awe, still holding his hair. "Shit. You're amazing," Michael panted, feeling lightheaded.

Trevor smiled and licked his lips. "You're one to talk. You look so fucking delicious when you sleep, Mikey, you know that? It was hard to keep my hands off you."

The thought made Michael's cheeks get warm and his cock twitch in Trevor's hand. "Well, don't. Next time, I mean," he muttered.

Trevor raised his eyebrows. "While you sleep? Is that... permission?" He started stroking Michael's cock, grinning widely. "Didn't know you'd be into that."

Michael chuckled, thrusting into Trevor's hand, finally breaking their eye contact as he dropped his head back against the pillow. "Me neither. I blame you."

"Don't even try that, Cowboy. You're just as freaky as me," Trevor scoffed but with humor in his voice before getting on his knees to reach for a bottle of lube on the nightstand, letting go of Michael's cock. Michael whined a bit, but after Trevor got the lube open, poured some on his fingers and some on Michael's cock, and reached to finger himself, his free hand came back to pleasure Michael.

"I could do that for you, you know," Michael groaned quietly, but he did love watching the look on Trevor's face as he stretched himself.

Trevor chuckled. "Like I said, just relax. Enjoy the show."

Michael hummed an answer, but couldn't just stay still and watch. He took Trevor's cock in his hand and jerked him off slowly, making him moan deliciously and close his eyes.

"Enjoying the show a lot, T," Michael murmured, his gaze wandering between Trevor's face and his cock. Trevor laughed breathily and then groaned as he added a second finger. Michael moved his hand a bit faster to distract him from the discomfort, and it seemed to work, based on the smile creeping back on Trevor's lips.

But then Trevor muttered: "You do know you're a control freak, right?" and Michael raised his eyebrows in surprise.

"Am I?" Michael asked, confused, but didn't stop stroking Trevor's cock.

"Of course you are. Can't just allow me to take the lead." He smiled mischievously.

"Well, sorry, here I was thinking I was doing something nice for you," Michael scoffed.

"You're forgiven," Trevor sneered. Michael rolled his eyes but quickly forgot his annoyance when Trevor pulled out his fingers and moved up, lining Michael's cock against his slick hole. He looked into Michael's eyes as he lowered himself, making Michael gasp in pleasure as his cock slid inside Trevor.

"Fuck," Trevor hissed in discomfort, but still kept moving. Michael caressed Trevor's thigh that was tense and slightly trembling while stroking Trevor's cock — even when it was softening a bit — with his other hand.

"Just relax and take your time, Trev... You're doing so well..." Michael muttered; the compliment made Trevor's breath hitch, so Michael continued. "You feel fucking amazing, you're so good to me..."

Trevor let out a tiny whimper, sinking lower and lower until all of Michael's cock was inside him. They were both breathing heavily, and Michael knew Trevor was starting to enjoy himself again because he was getting harder in Michael's hand.

But then Trevor leaned over him, took his hands, and gently pushed them down on the mattress over his head. "Let me, Mikey."

Michael grunted softly, scrunching his eyebrows but not resisting. Trevor gave him a small, teasing smile, and without a warning he lifted his hips and then lowered them, making Michael close his eyes and open his mouth to gasp in a breath. "Oh, fuck, Trev...!"

Trevor's fingers wrapped around his wrist tighter and then he felt warm lips on his. Trevor kissed him gently at first, then deepened the kiss, and Michael couldn't help but moan as Trevor thrust up and down, picking up his pace.

Trevor broke the kiss, panting heavily. "Jesus, Mikey, you feel so fucking amazing inside me," he groaned and pressed his lips against the corner of Michael's mouth; the simple, intimate gesture making Michael blush.

"T-Trevor," Michael moaned an answer, his words failing him, and it didn't help his brain to function when Trevor took his cock deeper and faster. He was tight and hot and Michael felt like he was melting into him — but maybe he had been right when he called Michael a control freak. He wanted to touch Trevor, feel his skin, hold him tightly, thrust into him, come inside him...

Michael grunted and strained his fingers a bit, wanting to break free of Trevor's hold, but Trevor didn't notice or just ignored him. "Come on, Trev, I wanna touch you," he groaned.

Trevor huffed out a laugh. "Like I said. Control freak."

Michael grunted, but Trevor released his hands before he could complain again — and lifted himself upright, placing his hands on Michael's belly for support. Michael's hands immediately found Trevor's hips, and he gripped them hard.

Trevor smirked down at him and started rocking his hips again.

The angle was different now, and Michael could see himself sliding in and out of Trevor, in

and out; the sight almost hypnotizing. Trevor was hard, as well, his cock bouncing in rhythm with his movements.

Trevor scratched his belly lightly, making Michael hiss a bit, before placing his hands on Michael's forearms. He slammed his hips down, and Michael groaned, thrusting up into Trevor.

After that, Michael lost the little patience he had: he held Trevor so tightly by his hips that he couldn't move anymore, earning himself an amused glare. He ignored it and just kept thrusting into Trevor, cursing under his breath, and when Trevor moaned his name, he pistoned his hips even faster.

"Oh, Jesus, Trevor, you're fucking perfect," he grunted, feeling himself getting closer and Trevor's fingers gripping his forearms tight enough to hurt. Michael could barely keep his eyes on Trevor, the pleasure overwhelming him, but he wanted to see Trevor's face, now flushed red. Trevor licked his lips and threw his head back, letting out a desperate whine.

"Shit, I'm so close," Michael moaned. He let go of Trevor's hips and instead palmed his cock, jerking him off with fervor.

"Fuck, yes, Mikey, come on, come in me," Trevor gasped, his eyes closing and mouth opening as he panted and moaned. "I love you! I love you, I love you, Mikey, please...!"

"Trevor," Michael choked out, and then ropes of cum landed on his stomach as he thrust impossibly deep and shot his load inside Trevor, shouting out Trevor's name through his climax.

Michael's thighs were shaking, and he slumped back against the mattress; Trevor lifted his hips, making Michael's cock slide out of him, but he didn't roll off of Michael. Instead, he lay against Michael and buried his face against his neck, catching his breath. Michael caressed his back, barely aware of the mess between them.

Michael lost all sense of time as Trevor was pressed against him so warm and perfect. He felt a burst of affection that made him hug Trevor tight against him and kiss his sweaty forehead. He felt sappy and stupid, but Trevor hummed contently in response, so maybe the feeling was worth it.

"What are you thinking, T?" Michael murmured.

"Not much," Trevor sighed. "Just, uh..." He trailed off and cleared his throat, still pressed against Michael's neck.

"Yeah?" Michael prompted.

"... Never been called *perfect*." Trevor scoffed, but Michael had a feeling he was just putting on an amused facade.

Based on everything Michael knew about Trevor's life, he believed that no one had ever called him perfect. He couldn't imagine Trevor ever hearing nice things about himself; on the contrary, he had probably only ever heard how fucked up he was. And Michael had told him that, too, once or twice, but he didn't have to be like all the other assholes in Trevor's life. He could actually become the one person to tell him otherwise.

"Well, you are, Trev," he muttered, letting his hands wander along Trevor's spine.

Trevor snorted. "Yeah, right. You only say that because you were balls deep in me." Trevor rolled off of him, but stayed close to him, lying on his back. He wiped his chest and stomach on the covers and then threw it on Michael, who did the same.

Michael turned his head to look at him, eyebrows scrunched up. "Shit, Trev. That's not true. Besides, you're one to talk."

Trevor stared back at him with a confrontational look in his brown eyes. "And what's that supposed to mean?"

Michael's expression softened. "Nothing, man. It's just that you only tell me you... that you... love me when you're coming." He struggled to get the word out.

Trevor sat up suddenly, startling Michael. His eyes were furious as he spat out: "Oh! That's rich coming from you, M! You've never told me that in any way, so how the fuck am I supposed to know it would be okay to tell you when we're *not* fucking?! You've never even graced me with any fucking acknowledgment when I've told you! You never do anything but ignore me, you piece of—!"

Michael sat up after the initial shock about the outburst. He put his hand on Trevor's shoulder. "Hey, hey. Calm down, T, okay?" He asked, voice shaking a bit.

Trevor growled but stopped talking, and Michael squeezed his shoulder as he took a few deep breaths.

"I am calm," Trevor answered finally, grinding his teeth together.

"Right," Michael murmured, patting his shoulder quickly before lying back down and holding out his arm for Trevor. "Come back here."

But Trevor turned to look at him, not moving, and for a while, they just stared at each other. Trevor's whole body was on display and it was so hard not to get distracted by it — but Michael forced himself to meet Trevor's piercing gaze when he asked: "*Do* you love me, Mikey?"

For a moment Michael felt like he had just been tackled: the direct question took his breath away, and he couldn't answer immediately.

His stupor must have been obvious because Trevor scoffed. "If you don't, maybe you shouldn't keep running back to me whenever things get rough at home." His voice was tight, but he couldn't quite produce his usual harsh tone.

Michael knew immediately that leaving Trevor was not an option. Trevor had turned from someone fun to mess around with into a safe haven, someone he could always rely on. Thoughts and memories of everything they had done together ran in Michael's head, but his head still felt more clear than it had in a long time. He couldn't keep denying what he had denied for years and years, nor did he want to deny it when Trevor was voicing something that clearly bothered him.

But it still didn't mean it was easy. He didn't think expressing his feelings would ever become easy for him, not with the way he had learned to suppress all weakness under his father's thumb. And emotions, in that scrubby trailer at least, were definitely a weakness.

Maybe Trevor knew it. He waited patiently — although with a scowl on his face — while Michael searched for the words that didn't come. "I do, Trev," he finally said, maintaining eye contact and watching Trevor carefully but earnestly. "I do. It's just not easy for me to say like it is easy for you. I'm sorry."

The frown melted away as Trevor opened and then closed his mouth; he took a shaky breath and lay down as well, on his side facing Michael. Michael turned to his side too and laid his hand on Trevor's waist.

"Do you really?" Trevor asked, his voice quiet and gaze uncertain, so unlike his usual boisterous guise.

It made Michael smile softly because they were sharing vulnerability like never before. Sure, they had talked about their shitty childhoods before, but this wasn't powered by anger or disappointment. This felt good and real, and just the tiniest bit scary, but Michael pushed it aside and nodded.

Suddenly, Trevor's lips were against his and gentle, trembling hands held his face, their bodies pressing against each other as Trevor planted small kisses on his lips. It was sweet, but he could also feel a sense of despair in the way Trevor kissed.

"Trev," he muttered between kisses, wrapping his arms around Trevor who was pushing him on his back. "Are you okay?"

Trevor stopped but didn't pull away, pressing their foreheads together and letting his hands drop to Michael's shoulders. "No, I'm not okay. You love me?" Trevor murmured.

Michael chuckled. "Yeah, I do."

"... And still you married her."

Michael's laughter died down because Trevor sounded absolutely heartbroken.

He didn't think he could ever fix that heartbreak.

"Listen, I... I made a mistake, T," he sighed guiltily. Trevor tensed against him and Michael quickly continued. "Marrying her was a mistake. I did... fall for her, but it wasn't... It wasn't anything deeper than that. We've got nothing in common except the kids, and I thought that would be enough. I wanted that family life, wanted her to keep Tracey, but..." He hesitated.

Trevor lifted his head, staring down at him. "What are you trying to say, Michael?"

"... That it wasn't enough that I wanted that kind of life. It's still not enough. Amanda and I barely talk, all we do is fight or sulk over stupid shit. And I'm a bad father," he whispered, and when he finally voiced the thought out loud, he couldn't stop from pouring out every fear he had. "I'm not cut out to be a father. I don't know how to be with my kids because I've been away so much, and when I am home, I just don't... I just wanted to be a real father who loves his kids and does things with them instead of... Jesus fucking Christ, I'm no better than my own piece of shit father, the only difference is that I don't hit my kids." He let out a strangled, fearful laugh and wiped away the few tears that had gathered in his eyes.

Trevor took a firm but not rough hold of his jaw. "Hey. Don't you *ever* compare yourself to that asshole. You are *not* the same as him," Trevor said sternly, knowing full well what kind of a man they were talking about. "You love your kids, and they love you, Mikey, I can see that."

"They're just too young to realize how shitty I am," Michael murmured. "Besides, they like you a lot more than me."

Trevor shrugged.

Michael swallowed nervously. "I'm serious. Sometimes I think they'd all be happier if I wasn't around anymore," Michael breathed out, holding eye contact with Trevor. "Maybe... Maybe I should be with you. It's always been you and not her."

Trevor looked at him, stunned at first but then anger took over. "You made that choice yourself."

"I know I did, but—"

"And you're gonna stick with it," Trevor interrupted him, voice harsh. "You dare to even *consider* leaving them, and I'll *fucking*—"

Michael knew it was Trevor's own experience talking, and he also knew Trevor would mean whichever words came next. "I'm not gonna leave them," Michael interrupted quickly, holding Trevor's shoulders. "Of course I won't! It was just a thought." Just another one of his

stupid fantasies.

Trevor squinted his eyes at him. "A bad one," Trevor grunted after a while. "You made your bed, Sugar, now lie in it."

"Yeah, yeah," Michael grunted back at him. "I fucked up, Trev, I know I did."

Trevor sighed. "That you did. But hey, at least I'll be lying in the bed with you, dealing with your awful decisions." By the end of his sentence, he was smirking.

A smile spread to Michael's face as well. "Will you? Even with my massive fuck-ups?"

Trevor curled up against Michael, pressing his face against Michael's neck; Michael wrapped his hand around his shoulders and held him close. His heart was beating fast as the reality of the situation hit him: Trevor didn't want him to leave his family, but he also said they would be together.

Could he really have it all?

When Trevor spoke, his voice was soft. "When you got here I thought you were gonna fucking leave me. I've never seen you act like that."

"Yeah, I noticed," Michael mumbled. "Sorry, I didn't mean to."

Trevor nodded. "Yeah, yeah, don't worry your pretty head about it," he sneered, then paused to take a deep breath. "What I'm trying to say is that I'm happy with having this. We'll always have *this*, Mikey. Go play the straight family man but be sure to come back to me, too."

"And you're fine with that?" Michael asked, slightly dazed because he knew Trevor was possessive, had been ever since he met Amanda.

"I'm gonna have to be, ain't I?" Trevor murmured and ran his fingers over Michael's belly.

"Trev," Michael sighed. The thought of Trevor settling for an arrangement like this when he could have something more, someone fully committed to him and only him, was killing him a bit inside.

"Fine," Trevor huffed. "I hate sharing you with her but considering the other options... Living without you would be *hell* so I'll take this. I want you, and I wanna be a part of Tracey's and Jimmy's lives. Having to deal with our *darling* Mandy is just a necessary evil."

"Okay," Michael breathed out, overwhelmed. "If you're sure. I know I am. I'm just... I'll have to lie to them." And he felt a bit guilty about that — but not enough to give up Trevor.

Trevor raised his eyebrows. "I think it's a bit too late to start having a problem with lying,

don't you? You've lied to her since the fucking beginning."

"Yeah," Michael laughed a bit bitterly. "I'm an asshole. An asshole with you as my mistress."

Trevor snorted in amusement. "Mistress, eh?" He pressed a kiss on Michael's lips and grinned. "I'll be anything you want me to be."

Michael chuckled. "I know you'll be. So it's gonna be me, my wife, my kids, and my *mistress*. Ain't that something."

And at the time Michael was naive enough to believe that it was going to be like that forever, that he really could have it all.

A/N: Title is from *Hell Is Living Without You* by Alice Cooper.



Your Cips R colds barre my teeth Drinkin u in blending smudged edges Into the shape of our Breath



My FAV Disney 1998 PRINCESS "



गिः ६८५ so u mite I stuk tawking on this shit paper lut hay its me so ur still kool rite? yea thouset so 2.

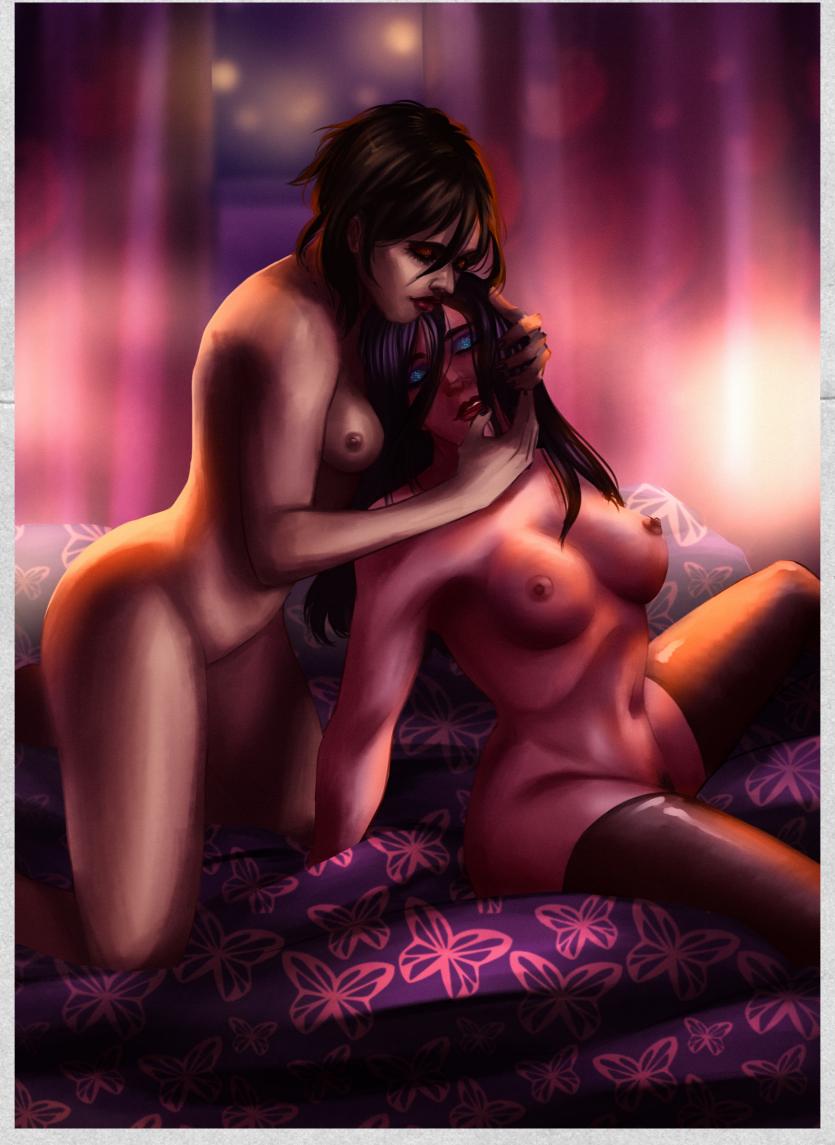
so i thouset it wood lok to tank
here about foocher? plans? liek wat rwe tanking aloot here! i meen i am Jour 4, mateur. : Jost care mat me Joas long as its Egethur : hope uno wat i meen ly that : reely liek v Mikey

Jou are aware that there are these things called phones and you can talk on them? Iguess we can discuss it this way but you better eat this fucking letter afterwards, you I'm not even comfortable talking on the phone. I mean, we've not a couple of fucking chicks, you dumbass Canuck. Sometimes you really kill me, you know? We should start gradually and work our way up, you know? That's how you wound up doing time already, and I don't want to see a repeat of that so soon. Let's case some small credit unions and maybe some gas stations. Let's ease you in affirst. OK! I know you like to go balls to the wall but do you see what the fuck it got you. I don't like doing this by myself. Angway, that's not going to happen again, you got that, stupid ass?!! Or you'll wish it was a fucking cop who's putting a cap in your damn careless mug. And stop using my name.

Misthatleternew??fuk Dam lalee: Jidat no v cared.
i will tri 2 keep my assout of
trulul 4 fuks saak. Just 4 v OK!
But wat r v going 2 J. 4 me if
J. that? HINTHINTHINT If u great me liek u didwentiget out of the klink then i am down with that. We roudliek that rite? U roll liek that rite? U leter no that ther ran tank laks wenit coms 2 me. i meen it. Placez Jont hurt ma.

Dann, gou're just right out with it, agen't you Jean, I guess I can fucking admit missed you, OK. Told you I'd rather do this shift with a partner, not by myself, OK? That to anyone, Jesus, so don't take if for granted. I don't say it lightly. Christ Almighty, I, we've got to work on your English. Didn't you pay attention in class or were you too busy jerking it under the desk? I'm just kidding, you asswipe. I bet you're blowing a gasket right now reading this motherfucker. Jou're a hot head from sniffing all of that gas, you know. It's going to do damage to your brain, if it hasn't already, you dumb fuck. Love, Cove,







Put Yourself In My Hands

Dedicated to Taylor trepidatingboarfetus

There is nothing to be scared of In my trap frightened of love Don't try to fight me You might even like me

Sends a shiver down your spine Told you that you would be mine Hush baby now don't you cry Oh don't you wanna die

Put yourself in my hands I'll hold you tenderly Put yourself in my hands You'll be safe with me

Sometimes it's hard to bare You can only stop and stare When your life unfolds And your soul is sold

Rough calloused fingers caress the soft pads of his feet with a weird featherlike touch that's almost ticklish but also sensual, and he finds himself grinding his bottom lip between his teeth wishing he could actually *see* what Mikey's doing, not just *feel* the lovely ministrations.

He whines again, not for the first time, and probably not for the last time either, behind the soiled sock that's been put into his mouth as a gag. Given explicit instructions to not spit it out -- and *really*, why *would* he when it still tastes like yesterday's heavenly offerings from Michael's last wank session -- he tries to sit as still as possible, but the smell is overwhelming him along with the touching and tasting...he's just missing seeing Michael commit these atrocities to his body.

Because he knows the hearing will come shortly. Michael loves to talk, and his charisma and penchant for knowing how to talk shit with the best of them have gotten them out of so many jams during heists, they should be criminal all on their own.

And talking dirty is something he *especially* loves. He has it down to an art. He can literally make Trevor come buckets just by describing the act of fucking.

He knows. Michael's done it out in public before. That's another love of Michael's: exhibitionism. The thrill of getting caught.

"Comfy, baby?" his silky voice clips through the lonesome darkness.

Trevor nods, albeit somewhat reluctantly at first. They've played games, sure, fucked around quite a bit in their short time together already, but something about this feels as if they've reached a point of finality, that this isn't just friendly screwing around anymore.

He thinks part of it is *definitely* in the way Mikey refers to him as "baby" a lot more, but he finds he doesn't mind.

But another part of it is in the frequency of these games, how much they've increased, and how Michael talks to Trevor as if he's the shit on his toilet paper one minute and then the most precious piece of amber the next, whispering things that scare Trevor's heart because he's not used to lines from old romantic black and white films with Bogart. The kind of bogarting he's used to comes on the end of a joint.

And Michael's intense, so fucking intense like a goddamn tornado. One minute he's as clear and calm as a sunny day, and out of nowhere, a storm comes in quickly, wrecking everything in its path, setting everything on its side, and it's gone like it was never there. That is Michael's inability to control himself sometimes. He's getting better. Jesus Christ knows he's not nearly as fucking bad at it as Trevor is, but a lot of it does seem to be reserved towards Trevor for whatever reason.

But that's not even it, either. Michael doesn't even hurt him.

Trevor's not some clueless dipshit and has actually talked to a few women who are like his mother and, well, maybe a couple of twinks like that too, but he'll never tell that to anyone. He's aware of things called limits and safewords, but it's never been something they've discussed because it feels like the pussification of sex to Trevor, and well, Michael always seems to just *know* when enough is enough.

Hands brushing up the insides of his thighs bring him back into the moment. He sucks in a breath and chokes on more of the salty used fabric remnants, whimpering around the offending piece of material.

"It's OK, T, " Michael's soothing voice coaxes again, and he finds himself reaching towards it without realizing. "You're safe with me. You know I'm not gonna hurt you."

It's not even a question because he *knows*. He just knows that Michael can't bring himself to do so. They won't hurt each other no matter how mad they get over the dumbest bullshit because there's now a bond that goes beyond brotherhood.

He thinks...no, he knows. This isn't friendly love. This isn't even brotherly love.

They are soulmates, and this is the stuff that gets written into novels or the stars.

A wet tongue drags a long trail of saliva and desire down his semi-chub while a meaty digit strokes at his insides, bringing his cock painfully to attention. He wants to cry out, tries miserably to do so, but the realization that if he does, he could choke on an article of clothing sets in, and he thinks that would probably be the most fucked up way for him to die.

Trevor Philips? Death by sock. Did he enjoy it? Check.

There's a shifting of limbs, his and Michael's, and he becomes suddenly aware of the junction of his ass meeting Mikey's groin. Room temperature oil drizzles between his cheeks, and hands work diligently to knead it in where Michael wants it to go. Before Trevor can stop himself, he's blushing embarrassedly like some fucking ridiculous wedding night virgin because no matter how many times they've been together now, this part always gets to him for reasons he can't explain; the part where he knows what's going to happen next.

There's slight pressure and some pain until Michael adjusts angles searching out where they both love it the most, and when he hits it, Trevor sings out for him, sock be damned.

"Oh yeah, *my pretty baby*," Michael says in the lewdest tone to date Trevor's ever heard him use, "don't fuckin' fight it."

The tie over his eyes comes off, and sky blue eyes penetrate him as deeply as the cock in his ass is doing his soul. He stares up into his keeper's face and muffles nonsensical declarations of devotion into his restraint along with begging and pleading as he feels white-hot fire deep in his belly begin to form.

Michael captures his lips with his own, kissing and sucking as if he's a succubus who craves the life from him. He pushes Trevor's legs forward, trying to go as deep as he can, warranting a loud groan as a reward. "C'mon, Trevor...look in my eyes."

He's literally a sopping ball of a mess as he peeks upward at the body hovering over his. His dick is so engorged, it's practically purple and ready to explode like a fucking rocket right off his abdomen if only he'd let it, he's so hot all over like the fires of Hell have sucked him in for being so goddamn wicked, and when he realizes he loves the beautiful being gazing down at him so lovingly yet so possessively, tears leak from the corners of his eyes.

Michael gently touches his cheek and wipes away an errant wet strand, shushing him. "Hey, don't cry. C'mon T, look at me. Cum with me, baby. Together," he promises as he grips Trevor's fingers in his.

He never has to lay a hand on himself or have Michael touch him. Michael can get him off

just by the act of talking him there and the thought of them cumming together, just as Mikey says.

After the rush is over, they rest together still connected by hand and pelvis. Neither one is willing to be the first to break contact, and that's how it's becoming. They're growing more and more like this, connected at the body and soul, bound to each other.

Trevor sighs as Michael pulls him to his chest tenderly. "C'mere, angel." And he drapes the old threadbare comforter over them, then throws an arm over Trevor before settling into sleep.

He regards the dozing figure before him and thinks that the term of endearment is wasted on the likes of himself and that it's really the sleeping beauty next to him who's a fallen angel sent to heal him somehow.

And he wonders who will write their story into the stars someday.

Author's Note: Put Yourself In My Hands is by The Adicts, and this is dedicated to Taylor because I write waaaaaay too much delicious angst, so I hope this made up for it!

Sea Water and Summertimes

trepidatingboarfetus

It's the blistering asscrack of summer, and there isn't much to do besides sit in boredom and avoid the heat from the last credit union they held up over in LaGrange. They're farther south than they've ever been, venturing even beyond what they consider their "region." They'd had to push a little more, go a few more miles because they were running out of places to knock over since they were pissing most of their money away on blow, booze, food, gas, and anything else that felt good, but it is at least warm enough to sleep in the car, so they don't need to worry about pissing away money on motels, thankfully.

But the more south they go, the more the humidity gets to them, and the more it seems to get to Trevor's head. He's bitchy one minute, stripping clothes the next, and then rambling random phrases that Michael can't understand. He's sure it's French, and it shouldn't surprise him that the Canadian knows French...because don't they all know some French up there anyway? But anyway, his new *partner*, for lack of a better word, is starting to worry him a bit.

Do Canadians' brains melt in the heat?

Trevor is resting currently in his formerly white Fruit of the Looms with his legs kicked up and hanging loosely out the window of the Chevette in the overbearing heat while they sit parked next to a lake listening to the boombox T had jacked from someone's backyard one day while they were running. He has to give it to the guy; in another life, if he'd been American, he'd have made a great wideout to Michael's gun of a throwing arm...if only. The way he could catch or pilfer shit while running from the cops is a sight to definitely see.

Of course, there is the *slight* problem that the Canuck has all of the temperance of a hummingbird on crack sometimes which is probably why his efforts at team sports in school had failed spectacularly or so Trevor had told him one still chilly morning not too long ago when they were hiding out in an abandoned garage. Hockey had been a no go. Michael still pales to think of where exactly T had crammed the hockey stick on his coach. Of course, he never went into detail about *why* he had done that, but if Michael has to guess, T isn't exactly keen on taking directions sometimes, especially if the game plan has to change quickly. He's working on changing that with the man. He hadn't been a team captain for nothing. He sees potential, and T is fucking chock full of it.

Case in point, Trevor had mumbled something at one point when they'd seen a putt-putt course a while back that he'd been something of a teenage golfing amateur league champion, so he *has* skill enough by himself, but Michael needs to figure out how to channel that so they can work better in tandem.

The person in question is belting out the chorus to West End Girls by Pet Shop Boys and

banging his head like a mad man, his longish locks swaying back and forth with him. He's sitting cockeyed in his seat already, and how close he is to Michael already has the bigger man's heart thumping just a little faster than the song. He's tried to pretend that he doesn't notice this in the months they've been together, and he's also tried to liken it to Trevor having not had many -- if any -- friends in his short lifespan. Or maybe he's had more female influences in his life. Something. There's got to be something to blame for why Trevor is always so close to him or why he's so handsy and clingy and *always right fucking there*.

He sighs as Trevor's head plops backward against his chest. Fucking shit, as if it isn't sweaty enough. "What *is* it, T?"

The tall sinewy youth looks up at him with a cheesy grin. "Why, nothing much, Mikey. I'm just bored out of my fucking skull now. There's got to be something to do, eh?"

Michael swears he tries to be patient, and God better be keeping score, because sometimes it's way too fucking much, he thinks as he groans irritably, "I told you, there's not much we *can* do except lay low in this fucking forest for a few days, T, and then when the coast looks clear, we can move on. And goddamn, I forgot how hot it gets around here during summer, so get the fuck off me, will ya?" He shoves at the taller man a bit, trying to get him to get the picture.

Trevor doesn't budge but instead stares up at him with those wide doe eyes, as pretty as Bambi's but probably not as innocent. "So why don't you take off your stuff if you're that hot? No one's going to see."

He stares at Trevor, nonplussed. "Are you stupid? *You'd* see, you fucking nut. No, no way."

Trevor merely shrugs at him, trying his damnedest to look neutral. Michael can *tell* these things. "It's only me, huh, and you've seen me as bare as my mama made me. And I'm in my skivvies, so it's not like I'm going to tell anyone." That cheesy, lopsided grin slides back onto his face. "We're both guys — c'mon, Mikey! Don't be such a pussy, geez!"

The more Michael thinks about it, the longer and harder he stares at Trevor. He doesn't know what he's thinking, really. Part of him wants to tell T to fuck off and get his kicks somewhere else because he's not playing, part of him is telling him that this is his friend and that his friend is right about him being too fucking uptight just like dear ol' Dad, and a smaller part is still looking over his partner's slim body, admiring how nice it looks without all the layers of clothing they've had to wear for months. But he's also slightly saddened by how thin Trevor looks beneath all of the muscle. He can actually count his ribs which he could swear isn't supposed to be a good sign, and now that he thinks about it, his new friend doesn't eat a whole lot either.

He shakes his head and shrugs his shirt off while Trevor catcalls much to his chagrin.

"Stop that shit or I'll put it back on."

His friend nods and begins bobbing his head along to the music again. This time, it's some song that neither one is a hundred percent sure they've heard before going on about being friends who are secret lovers who shouldn't be left alone together, and the both of them begin to look at each other strangely as they listen. Michael feels his heart fluttering and his face flushing, and everything's getting weirder because Trevor's face is also moving closer to his...and he's not really sure what he expects when suddenly a loud brap of gas -- and not the car or utility kind -- goes through the car, ripping through the music, and Trevor giggles slightly maniacally as he sits up and apologizes in a very high-pitched falsetto French accent, "Excusez-moi! Oops!" And that shit-eating grin is back. "L'amour c'est comme le vent, tu ne peux pas le voir, mais tu peux le sentir. That's how I feel about that," he laughs as he turns off the radio.

Michael uses his shirt to plug his nose in hopes that this isn't like some of the nastier ones that Trevor's dealt but laughs along with him because he thinks the lyrics caught the both of them off-guard, and they both need a good distraction. "Jesus Christ, Trev. At least that wasn't one of the worst ones."

The laughter dies down into an easy companionable silence again after a while, and when Trevor's head falls onto his shoulder, he finds that he doesn't mind with his shirt off because it's not as uncomfortable now. He even finds himself playing with a few muddy locks of Trevor's coarse hair that he's been trying to grow into some sort of miserable attempt at dreads. He's surprised when he hears the soft sigh that escapes his friend's slightly agape mouth. T looks like he's never been at peace.

Michael thinks he's never seen a more appealing look on anyone in his entire life.

He smiles gently down at Trevor, continuing to finger his locks of hair playfully. "So is it some sort of requirement from birth that Canadians have to know French or is that just something you're special at?"

Trevor's still so relaxed, he answers almost in a trance, "It's what happens when you're moved through so many foster homes all over the place. I had to pick up French in Quebec to survive because some of those fuckers will spit on you if you speak the Queen's English."

Michael knows that his own childhood was nothing to smile about, but why does he always wind up feeling somehow like Trevor got paid something worse in spades? He starts to frown but shakes the thought from his head and changes the subject. "So speak some French. I've never heard you really speak it much, and I was honestly starting to think that the sun was scrambling your brain earlier, so I thought that shit was nonsense."

Trevor looks put out at first and then a sly smile pops on his face. "Oui oui, mais bien

sur, Mikey! Tu es le cul d'une vache," he grumbles and then heaves a huge sigh, taking Michael's larger hands in his. "Mon endroit préféré c'est avec toi. Je pense que je sais ce qu'est l'amour, et c'est grâce à toi. Chaque battement de mon cœur est un je t'aime que je t'envoie. Je te tiendrai dans mon cœur jusqu'à ce que je puisse te tenir dans mes bras, Michel."

The way Trevor rolls his name all French-sounding off his tongue does things to him that he doesn't even know can *be* done to him, and his heart feels like it's in his throat. "I don't know what the hell you just said, but it was sexy as fuck."

Trevor's face looms closer to his, looking desperate. "S'il te plaît, permets-moi de te sucer la bite." He allows a finger to trail down Michael's chest, slowly going towards the hair around his belly button. His tongue slowly darts out to lick his lips.

Something in Michael snaps like a warning that this is going into uncharted territory, and the crazy language is overloading his senses. He inches away for a moment just to breathe and begs, practically whines, "Trevor, for fuck's sake, English!"

"Huh?" And just like that, whatever trance he was in previously appears to be mostly gone. He laughs, but the sound is hollow. "Oh, sorry. I got carried away, eh? Just looking for something to do," he says so softly that Michael can barely hear him, and then he goes back to looking out the window.

"What...what did all of that mean?" Michael asks curiously, testing the waters.

"Oh...oh, none...n-none of it mattered. It was just nonsense, as you said."

Michael has a hard time buying that, giving the way the man across from him is now acting so sullenly and just the way it flowed from his mouth so sweetly, it meant something. It *had* to have meant something.

But again, Trevor's like dealing with a cornered animal sometimes, and this is one of those times, so he chooses a different approach and decides that the pretty French can wait for another day.

"You said you were looking for something to do? What do you want to do, T?"

Trevor casts him an odd penetrating gaze that reminds him of somewhere between a scared child, someone kicked a puppy, and a horny tomcat. "You really don't want me to answer that."

Something in Michael persuades him to mentally test the waters again, dip a toe right in there and feel around even if it's nothing but cold and stagnant in return...though everything within him is telling him it will be pleasantly warm. Like the right amount of warmth one gets from the ocean water down south at the tail end of summer. He remem-

bers that from the few times his mom dragged them on vacation to the little beaches in the small towns on the outskirts of Vice City.

He clears his throat and rolls his shoulders nervously. "I...I do want you to answer that. I wouldn't have asked otherwise, dumbass."

Trevor starts to say something several times, pauses, starts up again, licks his lips, and closes his mouth with a noticeable clanking of his teeth, then groans. "Holy fuck, Mikey, you're *such* a tease." He scratches at the inside of his thigh like he's dying to get at an unreachable itch.

And then everything clicks for Michael like a safe opening in his head. *Kaching*. He looks down at the very obvious tent in his friend's tighty less-than-whiteys, and his mouth waters. What the fuck is going on here? His brain is screaming at him. Is his friend just bored and horny or is his friend horny for *him*??

It's *not* like he hasn't had thoughts. For fuck's sakes, he *loves* sex, he *loves* to jerk off as much as the next guy, so he assumes that everyone's had the stray thought, right? Wondered what something might feel like? It's normal shit, it's got to be. But no one strays into that area because no one *does*.

But now he's no longer an All-State QB, his dad is no longer around, his mom can't be disappointed in him and feel like she needs to say the rosary over him every Sunday, and no one's going to make fun of him. He's lonely and got an itch to scratch too. And God help him, he's thinking all sorts of thoughts.

And he's scared.

"I've never done anything before, Trevor." Trevor starts to grin, and before he can get his wiseass statement out, Michael clarifies, "I ain't a virgin, you dipshit. I've just never...not with guys." He blushes furiously. "Not sayin' I'm against it, but I've just never done it. No one's really, uh, *open* about it where I'm from?"

The wiry punk across from him shrugs. "Eh, they aren't exactly back home either, but I don't really give a fuck about that kind of thing. I just do whatever feels good, ya know?"

"Are you saying you've done this a lot??" Michael looks at him, perplexed. Trevor shrugs again, nonchalantly, and Michael can feel his heart thumping erratically now beneath his skin. Fucking Jesus, he's not sure if he's pissed off that this asshole could even be proposing something that could give him that shit everyone's dying from now -- that GRID shit if he's *actually* been with that many guys -- or if he's more pissed off that he's obviously not that special now, and this is just bored T looking to bust a fucking nut.

And before he can pop a blood vessel and Trevor in the eye at the same time, his friend pipes up, "I...uh, haven't been with *that* many guys, uh yet. Just a f-f-few, ya know?"

And Michael relaxes. OK, that's better. That he can work with. That's like a chick saying she's been with just a couple of guys, right? Doesn't mean she's been around the block, just that she's not harder to get into than Fort Knox.

For some reason, he also finds it really adorable the way his silly Canuck friend stutters when he's jittery. He leans back against the window, looking at Trevor nervously but also full of excitement to try something new. It's like being in the ocean all over again, feeling the sand between his toes as the water glides further up to his waist. "So what do you want to do then? You gotta tell me."

Trevor scratches at his thigh again, and Michael can't help but move his eyes towards there, watching like some fucked up pervert, but it's been a while since he's been alone and been able to rub one out, and he would be lying if he didn't admit that this is turning him on. "Uh," his friend draws out slowly, pensively, "I didn't give it much thought. I thought you were gonna dump me on the side of the road in my underwear and peel out, Mikey, honest eh."

"What? Why the fuck would you think that?" And not for the first time nor probably the last, Michael wonders what kind of hell on God's green earth has this guy been through in just under 21 years.

Trevor hasn't stopped scratching at himself, but his hand has moved closer to his groin, and he looks into Michael's eyes as he says, "Why would someone as gorgeous as you be into debasing shit like that? You're not fucked up like me."

And it takes every fucking last working muscle in Michael's body not to reflexively moan at his friend because now he's sure that T is at least attracted to him -- even if the jury is still out on this being Trevor just trying to get off -- but he does pull his cargo shorts down and lets them pool around his ankles. He thinks to himself that this is the place where they can start to meet, that this is where they can find the connection they're lacking to form their bond. He doesn't want to tame his friend like some beast, he just wants to be a team.

And what better way is there to be a team?

He watches the reactions on Trevor's face with amusement. There's a look of confusion, replaced quickly by blushing when he realizes that Michael has gone commando under his shorts today because of the heat, and then it's followed by what Michael can only guess is pure wicked lust when he understands what's going on here. "Trev, you got it wrong, bud. I'm no way in hell some sort of angel." But Michael is nervous, so he decides he needs to be the one to start this out slowly; just like the ocean, one can't just jump right in unless they want to create problems for themselves. No, he needs to ease into this new thing. If Trevor comes running into it headfirst like he does with everything else, Michael's going to get pushed under, and he doesn't want to drown; he wants to wade gently

in the ocean and let it glimmer around him. "Let's start off easy though, OK? I may not be a fucking virgin, but I am to this."

Trevors nods emphatically, almost so quickly that Michael's afraid he's going to nod his fucking head right off. "OK, OK," he chirps gleefully, clapping his hands together, "how about I watch you jerk off? That's easy right?"

That's it? That's fucking *it*? Michael doesn't know how to feel and says as much. "What the hell? I didn't mean we needed to be crawling at a goddamn snail's pace, dumb fuck. I mean, I'm horny too, for God's sake."

"But watching you stroke yourself to climax is *so* fucking sexy, Mikey, and I've already peeped on you once. I want to watch you do it, and I want you to watch me watching you do it." And he looks so fucking serious as he says it.

And so, so fucking hot. Oh Jesus God.

"Y-you...you've already watched me once, you sick bastard?"

Trevor palms himself and groans loudly. "Oh yeah, Mikey, fuck. Just like that."

Oh Jesus Christ, and his new friend even likes being talked dirty to. Michael has a thing for it, but he never found any girl into it back home, and it's just not the same paying someone to be into it the couple of times he's paid for a quick bang.

He can imagine himself in the warm salty water, wiggling his toes, the sand tickling his skin, and the water just keeps coming closer and closer to his face, but it's not scary anymore. It's almost welcoming how it's guiding him away from the bottom, why is he not scared? Shouldn't his panic button be hitting right now?

"It figures you'd be a dirty fuck like that," Michael laughs darkly, rubbing himself so pains-takingly slow because they've got nothing but time, and he wants to commit this to memory. One of these days, he's going to make a movie of their lives and damned if he isn't going to tell it all, even these beautifully dark parts. "C'mon T, it's not fair that you've watched me. Turnabout's fair play."

Trevor hisses in frustration but doesn't refuse and shimmies out of his last remaining article of clothing, and Michael has never even so much as peeked at him when they've had to use the john, so he's actually impressed to see that T is in no way small or even average. He's built a little thinner than Michael who's thick, but his whole body is on the long and lanky side so that doesn't come as a surprise, and he has a nice set of fine dark curls.

He called Michael gorgeous, but really, Michael thinks there's nothing on Trevor that isn't unattractive at all. He should have women and men hanging off him.

But he doesn't act normal, something that suspiciously sounds like his father whispers in Michael's mind.

Somehow he's going to help his friend, help fix him, help do something for him, help love him, something.

"C'mon T," he encourages silkily. "I wanna see you too. I need to see you."

Trevor slowly nods, and they begin their dance, eyes locked on each other, watching each other as they stroke themselves into oblivion, and Michael can feel himself slipping further and further underwater in the recesses of his mind as he watches Trevor come undone all over himself, crying Michael's name one minute and mewling like a newborn the next, and it's too much.

"God, Trevor," he hisses as he bucks wildly into his hand, "you look so fucking sexy like that, holy shit! I think I'm gonna--"

And before he can even finish that sentence, Trevor swoops down and engulfs him in his mouth, and it's warm and wet and heaven all at the same time, and he's crashing underneath the waves so hard, he's sure he's screaming as he's holding onto Trevor for dear life, and he's never felt so great while he's drowning on land.

Both men busy themselves with catching their breath and looking everywhere but each other. Michael stares at the ceiling of the Chevette as his heart quivers wildly in his chest. Jesus, he feels like he just went four quarters again, but it's also great.

A random realization pops in his head. "Did you swallow?"

Trevor looks over at him. "Huh?"

He waves him off, blushing suddenly. "Oh, nothing. I just…none of the girls I ever dated did that. They'd spit. Only the couple of older women I've, uh, been with have done that." Goddammit, he still can't bring himself to call them whores. It makes him feel bad for both them and him.

His friend looks at him innocently -- *is* it innocently; Michael never truly knows -- and drags his fucking cum-covered tongue over his lips, torturing Michael straight to the core. "They don't know what they're missing. You taste good like the sea."

Trevor Philips is going to be the death of him, he knows it. And that's OK with him.

Author's Notes: Hello! A few notes here to help the reader!

LaGrange is pretty far south indeed. I placed them in Indiana because there is a LaGrange in northern Indiana, and they're somewhere within the Hoosier National Forest near Lake Monroe hiding out lol.

The song on the radio is actually a song from 1986 called Secret Lovers by Atlantic Starr! Look it up lol.

Trevor's French:

L'amour c'est comme le vent, tu ne peux pas le voir, mais tu peux le sentir: Love is like the wind; you can't see it, but can feel it (a joke about his passing gas lol)

Oui oui, mais bien sur: Yes, yes, but of course

Tu es le cul d'une vache: You're a cow's ass

Mon endroit préféré c'est avec toi: My favorite place is with you.

Je pense que je sais ce qu'est l'amour, et c'est grâce à toi: I think I know what love is, and it's because of you

Chaque battement de mon cœur est un je t'aime que je t'envoie: Every beat of my heart is an I love you that I send you

Je te tiendrai dans mon cœur jusqu'à ce que je puisse te tenir dans mes bras, Michel: I'll hold you in my heart until I can hold you in my arms, Michael

S'il te plaît, permets-moi de te sucer la bite: Please let me suck your dick

Also, Michael refers to AIDS as GRID because, sadly, for a long time, at least until the mid-90s, it was referred to by that acronym (especially in our neck of the woods) as "gay-related immune deficiency" or "the gay disease" because people were woefully ignorant and refused to see it for what it was. It wasn't an accepted acronym, just one that the uneducated populace used and was unfortunately used as interchangeably as AIDS at one time.



And I Love You So Violent

(Inspired by and dedicated to Adam Yeksanq) trepidatingboarfetus

The deadfalls of August were in the summer evening air; a bonfire on the beach long-since forgotten about, its cool embers still sparking but also starting to die as the cold lake water rushed in to claim them carefully. The harsh reminder of the approaching season's wind had already cut through the rest of their merry gang of misfits, as everyone else had cleared out before the oranges and purples of the sky had set in. Brad and Moses were planning to get Lester nice and drunk at a titty bar since he legally could now, and the prospects of it had made the bespeckled guy blush red and bounce quietly with anticipation all night.

They had also planned to go because this was gearing up to be quite the damn spectacle, especially wherever Brad was involved, but as the evening wore on, and the more pre-celebration that was tossed around, and Michael plied him with, their eyes and hands ended up on each other more, so when it was time to go, no one else even dared to bother to raise their voice -- although Brad came close enough to butt heads but lost his courage with one *look* from Moses, and he walked off in disgust.

Trevor had never been more grateful to see them go than he was then. He didn't get too many moments with Michael to himself these days with everything going on in everyone's lives, and he wasn't some fucking romantic girl, but it was nice to sit at the water's edge and pretend to be something as close to normal as he could hope to get.

Michael's hand slid smoothly up the small of his back, causing him to shiver. "Cold?"

"Are you kidding me? This weather's for pussies," he snorted, but Michael's body heat was still too enticing so he leaned into him. He took in the Old Spice, cheap whiskey, and Redwoods that were Michael's patented aroma, and God, was it ever intoxicating. He licked a trail from Michael's pulse on his neck up to his earlobe and then took the offending flesh into his mouth to suck savagely on it.

"Pussies? Right," Michael laughed and pulled him closer. "Jesus, don't stop doing that."

Trevor could feel the heart beating beneath him, feel it quicken, and it made his race rapidly knowing that someone as filthy as him could elicit such a reaction from someone like Michael Townley.

They had come from different paths even if they had ended up merging at a point in time. If they'd had the luck to go to the same school, grow up in the same town...would they have been friends -- lovers, even? Trevor knew the trailer park history, the physical and mental abuse, but Michael had *tried* to do something with himself, had wanted to be normal, whereas Trevor hadn't cared to figure out what *normal* even was. He just knew that

his dad hated him with every fiber of his soul for being so detached from it, his brother ridiculed him for it along with every other kid on the playground, and his mother tried to console and protect him, but even she couldn't forever. He'd had to grow up too quickly, and at times, it felt like he hadn't officially ever grown up.

He couldn't see them together when Michael had been Mr. All-American, banging the cheerleaders and anyone else who wanted a ride. Trevor would've just been some stupid trailer trash fawning over him from afar and jerking it in on his moldy, stained mattress at night. Still harassing teachers during the day and torturing small animals to relieve the pain after school all while setting his homework and textbooks on fire.

So that they had these moments where they came together like the sand meeting the tide, they pacified something inside of him. Michael was only months older than him, but something about him had commanded respect and attention from the moment they had met, and Trevor could never help but follow. He'd follow him to Hell if he had to, he knew with every beat of his heart.

He figured it boiled down to what he'd heard called *daddy issues* one time by Lester when he was smarting off, and well, maybe it was. How could he *not* have had some of those given how he'd grown up? He hated his father with every fucking thing that he was.

But he was still a boy, deep down inside. He still wanted his daddy to love him, wanted him to come back, say it had all been a big fucking joke *ha ha ha*, *wasn't it fucking funny*? And pull little Trevor into his lap and love on him like he'd always craved his affection but had never gotten.

And so he accepted substitutes. And Michael was a gorgeous one currently moaning and shifting underneath him. Trevor knew his vulnerable spots well enough by now that he could teach a fucking course about them, from the nape of his neck right down to the span of skin right between his asshole and ballsack.

Michael knew his vulnerable spots as well though, and some were more so than others. He knew about the burns on his back that his dad used to give him, sometimes as punishment, but more often than not, just for the hell of it because he was bored and wanted to watch Trevor squirm, and as much as Trevor hated to admit it, those were the only memories he had of his father where he felt any emotion akin to bonding and love.

He wasn't sure how fucked up he was, deep down.

Michael was patient though and always seemed to know how to eke out both the best and worst in him, both during work and after work.

They stopped to catch their breath, and Michael lit a cigarette out of habit. Trevor's eyes followed the cherry tip with both a sick fascination and horror as Michael took a long drag, seeming to savor it before exhaling after a few seconds, and then he looked towards

Trevor with a funny look on his face.

"What...what the fuck is it?" Trevor asked as he worked to stoke the remaining embers and added whatever paper trash they had around them to keep the fire going. Michael's gaze wasn't scary by any means because Trevor, himself, could be scarier, but it *was* pretty fucking odd coming from Michael.

"I want to try something," came the simple reply as Michael gingerly rolled the cigarette back and forth between his fingers.

He never meant to hesitate, but something about the way Michael acted...Trevor was sent spiraling back to his youth. His nostrils and mind came alive with the smells of mildewed trailer wallpaper, grimy linoleum, old upholstery that had seen better decades, Seagram's 7, smoking tobacco, and burning flesh.

Michael's eyes flicked to him, tauntingly, asking that one damning question, "Do you trust me?"

And he did. He trusted him in a way he'd never trusted anyone with his life. He felt safe with him, safe in a way he'd always yearned to be safe with his family.

Michael was family.

"O-OK."

Michael smiled at him, and it was probably the same one that had dropped a couple of dozens of panties when he'd been a quarterback because it was his charming one, but to Trevor who could see right through the façade, it was all teeth, terror, and slightly cannibalistic.

And it was shooting sparks straight to his groin.

He watched as his best friend and often fuckbuddy took another long drag and then whispered, "Close your eyes."

He felt the vicious heat from the cigarette before he felt the delicious pain of its burn sizzling against his forehead, and he whined against Michael's hands. It took all of the strength in his body just to not ramble out *Daddy* then, but he was ready to bite out his tongue from embarrassment if that so much as fucking peeped out, dammit.

However, he couldn't deny how instantaneously hard that single action had made him, and how much his heart was beating, how simply *alive* he felt.

Suddenly -- unexpectedly -- Michael changed course and rushed in like the tides with his lips to cool the last remaining embers of Trevor's charred skin. His tongue lapped at him

like a giant wave, and Trevor felt his eyes going back into his head out of pure reflex just like his toes were curling into the sand out of the same from pleasure.

"It's OK, baby," Michael's voice murmured silkily against his ear, "I've got you. It's OK to want it because I want it too."

His eyes burst open into hot slits, mouth panting from desire. Not only did Michael know how to edge him till it hurt so good, but how could he be the best person out of all of them, but still be such a goddamn *dirty* soul?

Michael took another long puff until the tip was almost faded, and then he put the remainder of the cigarette out next to the spot he'd just created, and Trevor yelped in surprise, not quite ready for the rush but not even mad because how could he be? How could he be angry when Michael was rushing in with the cool night air to kiss away the pain in a way no one had ever done before?

Michael rubbed gently against the hardness daring to poke through Trevor's cargo shorts and leaned into him again. "I know you want to cum, baby. It's OK to let go." He slowly kissed his way up Trevor's neck. "It's just you and me here now, no one else in the world to hurt you." Then he fingered the newly scarred flesh he'd created, and that was all it took.

Trevor saw hot stars beyond his vision and became a bumbling mess in Michael's arms. "Daddy, I love you!" It slipped out before he could contain himself, and he ground his teeth down painfully, his face flushing red. Jesus, Michael would never let him live it down.

But Michael just stared at him.

Sometimes in the fading light, it looked like a lover sparing a fond glance, and sometimes it looked a bit like a hungry wolf regarding prey. And all he said was, "I love you too, baby," as he gathered Trevor closer while they gazed at the stars.

And maybe it wasn't anywhere near fucking normal, but it was them, and to Trevor, it was the only love he needed.

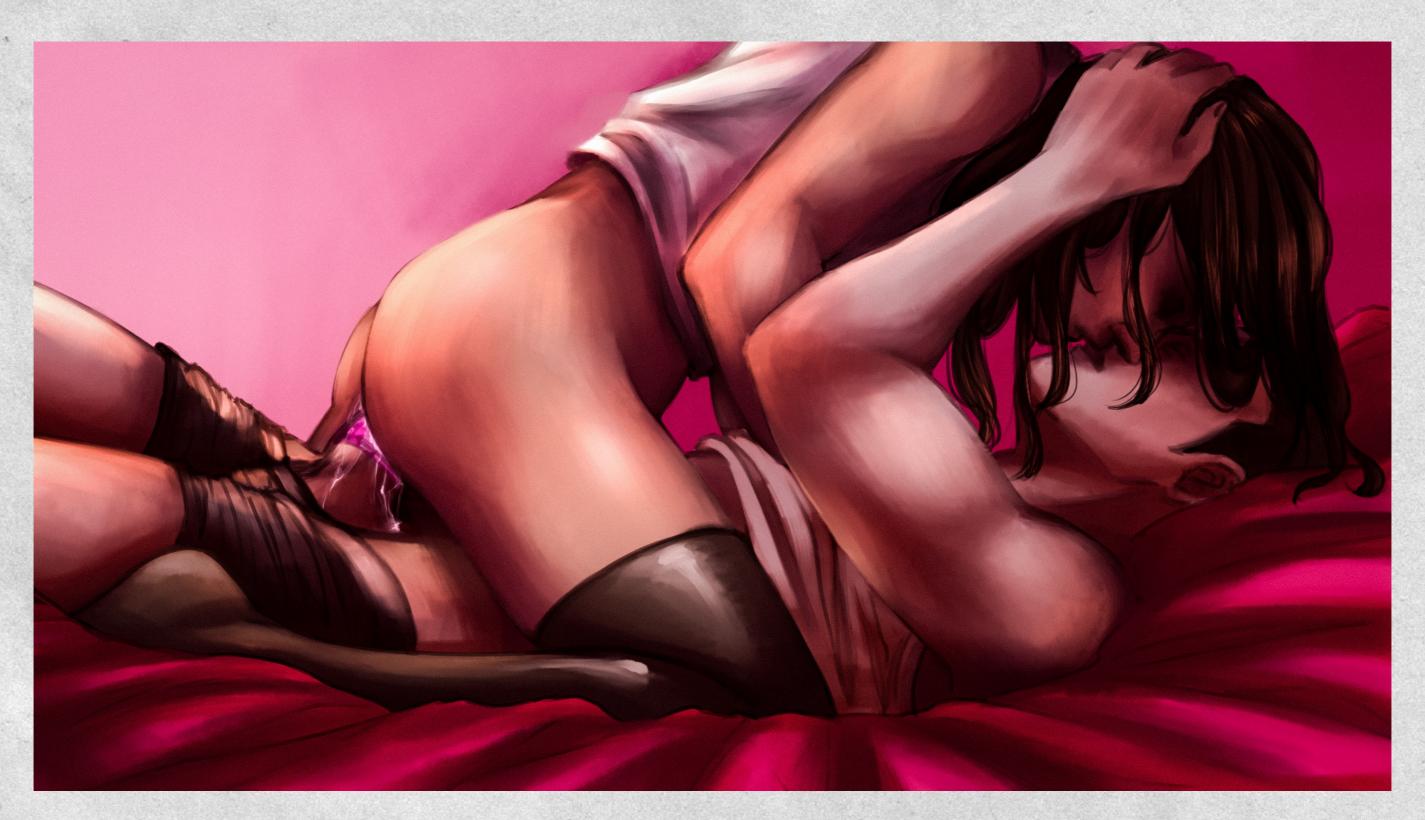
Author's Note: This is inspired by a picture done by the great adam_yeksanq on Instagram (you'll know it when you see it, trust me) and also the new Fleet Foxes song I just heard called Wading In Waist-High Water. Go listen. <3













High Enough trepidatingboarfetus

I don't like anyone better than you, it's true I'd crawl a mile in a desolate place with the snakes, just for you Oh, I'm an animal, hand me a tramadol, gimme the juice You are my citadel, you are my wishing well, my baby blue

I used to like liquor to get me inspired
But you look so beautiful, my new supplier
I used to like smoking to stop all the thinking
But I found a different buzz
The world is a curse, it'll kill if you let it
I know they got pills that can help you forget it
They bottle it, call it medicine
But I don't need drugs

'Cause I'm already high enough You got me, you got me good I'm already high enough I only, I only, I only got eyes for you

Do you see anyone other than me?
Baby, please
I'll take a hit of whatever you got
Maybe two, maybe three
Oh, you're phenomenal, feel like a domino, fall to my knees
I am a malady, you are my galaxy, my sweet relief

Addictions have been Trevor's only true family and friends for as long as he can remember. They are the lovers that embrace him into the night after everyone else has left, soothing him well into the next day and beyond. He loves that, and it's all he needs from anyone or anything. He has no use for people beyond a quick fuck, and even there he finds that sometimes his hand is better than the process of trying to find tail. It's mentally exhausting and a painful fucking chore, really.

All he's *ever* needed was his quick-fix medication. Fuck civilization. Fuck the goddamn RCAF too right up the ass. OK, so flying was another addiction of his. He felt more at ease in the air than he felt on the ground, and he wasn't quite sure why. Maybe because there's no one in the friendly skies to disappoint him or leave him behind when they don't want him anymore or beat the shit out of him just for being himself.

And that was all that he felt he ever needed in his miserable existence, but then he had to come in and ruin it all by being a better feeling than any of it could ever hope to be just by

flashing his gorgeous pearly whites along with those intoxicating blues.

Does he know just how much Trevor is willing to brave just to have a small sliver of a taste of him? To be able to prostrate before him and worship at L'autel de Michel because he knows he can do it for hours if given the mere chance. He would lather every inch of that skin with his tongue if Mikey would only say the word.

Michael is a dangerous drug, the kind he desires, the one his body demands he give into, but it can't easily procure. He can drink all day long, smoke a cigarette without a care in the world. Hell, pot or speed aren't hard to come by at all, and if he really tries his luck, neither are the harder ones like heroin, ice, or angel dust.

But even trying with all of his might, the addiction known as Michael is slightly harder to come by because it alludes him as much as the man himself does.

And it leaves him withdrawing, bitter, depressed, and craving in pain no different than anything else. Goddamn, he wants the world to end. What the fuck is the point of anything if he can't cave in and know what the hell it *is* he is even missing?

Oh, but he knows. He knows.

It is sloppy drunken kisses claimed during the late-night hours, touches here and gasps there, randoms acts of love only shown when inebriated or high as fuck only to fade away as quickly as the approaching dawn, leaving him feeling breathless, somewhat mystified, and crazy in love.

Sometimes just purely crazy.

God, Michael is just magnificently beautiful, and if Trevor could only figure out how to bottle the happiness he feels whenever he is around, he would figure out how to mass-produce it and keep it all for himself forever so he would never be without it for the rest of his life since he's gone nearly the first quarter of a century without.

He knows the problem with his plan is that he wanted to keep something as great as Michael to himself because he was afraid of what would happen if everyone gets ahold of him, and he simply disappears one day. He will go nuts with grief, and the thought of it nearly causes his stomach to wrench in panic, but he isn't sure he *can* keep something like Michael to himself. Michael will always find a way into other's hands, by hook or by crook. He knows that it is simply a matter of time and place, not something he can avoid.

So he tries to be OK, for the benefit of all because Michael is definitely a helluva drug.

But it comes at the cost of some of his happiness, so he tries to grab more time, longer and harder hits just so he can *feel*. Silently, he wonders if he's on Michael's mind when he's with *her*, but then he laughs and remembers.

He's a walking disease for which there is only one cure, standing before him, waiting to offer him blessed relief from his lips like spun golden beams from some sun god of old. He's lucky to even touch the face of this god, so no, he'll never be on Michael's mind when he reaches out.

He's already high enough even though his body is so desperate to get higher and keep going until sweet release.

AN: L'autel de Michel translates into "the altar of Michael."

High Enough is by K.Flay.



TRIED OUT TEARS
A CLAM LOST ITS PEARL IN A WILD STREAM
I UNDERSTAND NOW



your Hand in mine laughed & flow

As EASILY as I did when I saw you

Who ARE you and why arm!

DREAMING up your name?



The Importance Of Saying "I Love You"

AnneyLufkin

It was just another typical morning in Sandy Shores. Birds were chirping and the rays of sunlight filtered through the windows of the old trailer, as usual. Trevor woke up topless, wearing his standard dirty gray sweatpants and his red boots, looking at the ceiling. "Good fucking morning", told to himself. He stood up from his bed, which, as normal, was filled with cigarettes and crystal pipes, a pair of empty whiskey bottles, and some of those old porno magazines he had seen a million times but he never got tired of looking while jerking off every night before going to sleep. Trevor went to the bathroom wobbling and yawning, still half-sleep, and took a piss in his dirty toilet. After he finished peeing, he didn't head for Ron's trailer to shout out orders at him as he would usually do every morning. No; contrary to his settled routine, he just stood in front of the broken mirror gazing at his blurry shape, and, more specifically, he stared at *that* specific part of his body: a long, thick, pale pink and jagged scar that he had got for the last twenty-plus years in the left upper part of his abdomen. He put his fingers on his ragged skin, caressing it gently, and proceeded to close his eyes, automatically transporting him to another time and place.

Somewhere in the Midwest, February 4th of 1990 11:05 p.m.

Although it was Tuesday, the only pub in the small town was crowded with locals enjoying a drink after a hard day of work. The atmosphere was filled with a strong scent of whiskey, beer, and tobacco, and in the background, along with the drunken singing and shouting of the customers, it was possible to hear the notes of a country song from the 70s playing in an old radio. After Trevor and Michael pulled off their last heist at a small savings bank located two hours away from this small city, they decided to celebrate the success of the mission at a bar before moving to another God-forsaken town the next day.

"Mikey, did you see the face of that man behind the desk? I swear he shat himself in fear when he saw me pointing the shotgun at his face, hahaha! *Bang*!", Trevor put his hands mimicking a shot and laughed.

"Yeah, but then you went nuts and ended up shooting at his face *for real*" – said Michael, rolling his eyes in disapproval.

"Well, for your information, it happened that this prick was going to call the cops! What else could I've done, eh? You should thank me for saving your fat ass!".

"No, you asshole! I told you to not push it too far! How many times do I have to tell you that we **only** want the money and nothing else? It was supposed to be a quick and clean job, not a slaughter, ya hear me? You didn't have to kill that poor boy, for fuck's sake"- snorted Michael.

"I'm sorry, ok? I'll be careful the next time!" - pouted Trevor.

"You sound like a broken record, always saying the same thing since the first time we met, T. I'm tired of your void promises".

"Fuck you, Townley! You know perfectly that, if it hadn't been for me, you'd be now busted, kissing the sheriff's ass of this shitty rat hole and crying to release you, like the pussy you are. *Boohoohoo! Let me out, officer! I'm sorry for being a bad boy!*"- said Trevor doing a mocking face, and afterward gave a big gulp to his beer.

"Geez, enough with that. You're the one who should *thank me* that I could manage the situation and shot the cameras before the cops arrived because *someone* forgot his damn mask at the motel. You're a hothead who fails to do the most basic shit, Trevor. I'm still wondering how I could partner with you".

Trevor stuck out his tongue to Michael and mocked him: "blah blah, whatever you say. The important thing is that we could get the dough, and that's what counts, isn't it?" "Yeah, you can say that — Michael breathed out heavily — Anyway, cheers for another successful job, and for more that'll come, my stupid-ass pal", and both boys toasted. "By the way, uh…Trevor, you remember the girl we met some weeks ago at that stripper club at Ludendorff?" — Michael said a little nervous.

"A girl? Which of them? We've had a lot of private dances and banged with *many* girls, Mi-key".

"No, no, I refer...um... to the brown-haired girl with blue eyes that accompanied us before you complained to the DJ because the music was horrible, remember?"

"Ah, yeah ...You mean *the chick* that was shaking her fat tits like crazy to get desperately your attention and your dollars, like the sugar tits you have right here? Haha!" – Trevor got closer to Michael with a naughty smile, ready to tease him playfully, but Michael was fast enough to stop Trevor's hands before they could squeeze his breast, and both wrestled for some minutes.

"Trevor, STOP DOING THAT, you annoying fuck! Yes, is that girl, and she's not chubby, ok? She's got a gorgeous body".

"Meh, if you say so... she dances decently and has nice boobs though, but it's not my type at all... What's her name, by the way?".

"Amanda".

"Amanda? It ain't a bad name for a hooker" - Trevor let out a muffled giggle.

"TREVOR! – Michael threw him a murderous look– I know she's a hooker, but she seems a nice girl. It happened that after she did some private dances for me, I liked her enough to give me her phone number. Since the past weeks, we've been talking by the phone all the times you've been sleeping, partying, or buying that shit you've been into lately...that *meth* thing".

"So... what? Why're you telling me that, huh? You want to fuck with her in *our* motel's room while I'm out, looking for some fun?" – said Trevor gesticulating crossly, notably jealous at his friend's commentaries about his new female friend.

"It's not that, T... just...".

Michael downed his head, staring in silence at his almost emptied glass of whisky, doubting and sweating, maybe because of the heat of the cozy, crowded bar, whereas Trevor compulsively took sips of his drink, waiting anxiously for his friend's response.

"What? Jesus, Michael, don't leave me hanging!".

Finally, Michael opened his mouth, and said, with a sweet smile on his face:

"Well... I've thought a lot about it, and... I'm gonna ask Amanda for a date".

That last word hit Trevor like a slap in the face. He raised his eyebrows and stared off into space, trying to process that word in his head – the word that he'd always secretly lingered telling to him but never had done before, keeping in mind that Michael had never had any love or sexual relationship with a man in his life -not even give or receive an *innocent* kiss nor look at other men's cock while peeing just out of curiosity-, due that, as he'd told him in an occasion, he came from a very conservative and religious family. For this reason, much to Trevor's disappointment, he decided that the best solution for both was to stay just as friends. In fact, Trevor had tried to hit on Michael through sexual jokes since the first time they met, but perhaps because Michael always thought he had a twisted sense of humor, Trevor never tried to confess his romantic feelings seriously.

Trevor stayed in silence for so much time that Michael started to feel uncomfortable and asked "Hey, T, buddy, what's wrong? Did the fucking cat got your tongue?".

Trevor shook his head and did his best to look natural, trying as much as possible to minimize all the torrent of feelings he was carrying on his heart: anger, frustration, sadness, and a bit of self-pity. He grabbed the glass of beer with his hand so strongly that was going to break it, and, at the same time, he made a huge effort to stifle the tears that were about to stick out from his eyes, but, if they were going to appear anyway, he thought to say the typical cliché excuse of "I got a dust in my eye" that he had heard a thousand times in movies. Fortunately, he could manage to control himself and, as calm as possible, almost in a whisper, finally pronounced that word:

"A... date?" - Trevor wasn't able to make a full sentence without cracking his voice.

"Are you deaf? Yeah, that's what I've said, a *date*. I want to ask *Mandy* to become my *girl-friend*".

"B-But bro... we-we both know you're not the typical dork that dates girls! You're a Casanova! A stud! You don't *date* girls, you *fuck* with them! – replied Trevor, getting angrier this time.

"Yeah, I know it's a strange behavior coming from me, but I've realized we both have a lot in common and I came to like her a lot. What's more, if it's in my hand, I'd like to take her out soon of that life of misery with the money we'd get from other heists", said Michael with sparkling eyes.

Trevor didn't need more proofs to acknowledge that his best friend was in love with Amanda and replied:

"What the fuck are you saying? Now you want to spend all the money we've worked by the sweat of our brows on expensive lingerie and dresses for that whore? I'm fucking sorry, Mikey, but I'm not gonna help you with that adventure, my friend!"

...Or that's what Trevor impulsively thought to said to Michael. He was tempted to do it, but in a millisecond, he realized on one hand that, if he wanted to survive in this cruel world, he'd need a partner, and he didn't know anyone who could stand his rage attacks and weird habits better than Michael Townley, and, on the other hand, Trevor didn't want to hurt his feelings, because deep inside, he wished to be as happy as Michael would be with his potential girlfriend. Instead, he took a deep breath and stated:

"Anyways, I'm...I'm glad to hear that, Mikey...and I hope that b...err, Amanda, accept your proposal and you two could be happy" and faked a smile, something uncommon in him. "Thanks, Trevor. You don't know how much your comprehension means to me. I was doubting to tell you this, 'cos I had the feeling that you were gonna get upset or jealous about me dating someone different than you, hehe".

"O-of...course not! Who do you take me for? You...you have the right to bang and fall in love with whoever you want, sugar! We're best friends, aren't we? and friends are supposed to

support each other. Loyalty above all, my brother! That's what I always say! Hahahaha! — Trevor made sure that his laughter wouldn't sound forced and added: "Let's...let's toast for your success with Amanda, bro! Come here! Cheers!" They clinked glasses again and Trevor furiously drank all the golden liquor at one sitting, burping loudly afterward.

"Man, that was refreshing! I'm gonna order another drink. You stay here" – said Michael patting his poor friend's shoulder.

Michael stood up and went to the counter, dodging the bunch of drunk old men that were crowding together. After he ordered a whiskey 'on the rocks', he took the glass carefully, and, on his way to the table located at the bottom of the bar where Trevor was waiting for him spaced out in only-God-knows-what thoughts, an unfortunate event occurred that changed forever their relationship.

11:30 p.m.

"I apologize for doing that, ok?" It was an accident!" - claimed Michael.

"You fucking moron, haven't you got eyes in that toad face of yours? Did your parents never tell you to be careful with other people's stuff? Look! My brand-new leather jacket is ruined because of YOU!".

On his return to the table where an endless sighing Trevor was sitting, Michael, the one who had committed more professional-like heists than fingers had in his hands, the one who had such a fast and accurate aim while shooting that was known by the police of the state as "the Lucky Luke of the Midwest", *that* Michael bumped into an 'Angels of Death Motorbike Club' member by accident and dropped his glass of whiskey into the shiny black leather jacket of the biker, due to the fact he had been drinking a couple of bottles of beer, a shot of tequila, and this would be his second glass of whisky. Consequently, his sight and balance were not as sharp as the beginning of the night.

Although Michael excused himself countless times for this irrelevant and mundane incident, this man didn't seem to take it as light as someone normally would take it, no – this biker was different, starting from his physical appearance. This man, in his late thirties,

was as big as a wardrobe (6'5" of pure muscle), yet larger compared with Michael, who was corpulent enough to become the most famous quarterback in his high school. Besides, he had a funny-looking mustache, was wearing a fine pair of *Rayban* sunglasses -inside a bar at night- and skull-themed rings in his podgy fingers, and carried a red bandana in his bald head too. You could say that, if it wasn't for all the expensive leather decorated with fancy lettering that said "Angels of Death", this guy was a *hipster* – a unique *biker version* of a hipster, if there ever was such thing in the world.

Despite Michael was known to be a caring guy who likes to plan everything perfectly without leaving any loose end, the Michael of *that night* was neglectful (the older Michael would have never committed that unforgivable mistake), and, if Trevor had previously failed to carry his mask to that evening's heist, for Michael's part, he forgot the *little detail* to bring with him at least a small gun or knife to the bar just in case, maybe because of the multiple distractions regarding the celebration of his last job and the excitement he felt in his heart just by thinking in Amanda.

The biker grabbed Michael firmly by his red and blue squared-pattern shirt, and bellowed: "OR YOU EXCUSE YOURSELF FOR DIRTYING MY JACKET AND PAY ME A NEW ONE, OR I SWEAR FOR THE LOVE I HAVE TO MY BIKE AND MY BROTHERS THAT I'LL RIP YOUR FUCKIN' GUTS OUT FROM YOUR FAT CARCASS!".

"Ok, ok, calm down, tough guy. Let's go out to search for an ATM and I'll pay you the value of the jacket, alright?".

"Good. But if you intend to do something different, I'll flay you" – warned the biker doing a gesture of cutting his neck.

Meanwhile, Trevor, who was waiting anxiously for Michael to return from the other corner of the bar, hidden by the crowd and the noisy music, didn't know what his partner was doing that was taking too much time to bring a simple glass. Sick of waiting for Michael, and unaware of what had happened, he decided to stand up and search for him. But, curiously enough, he wasn't at the counter.

Not in the restrooms.

Nor in the pool and darts zone neither...

"Where the fuck did you go, Michael?" - he wondered. Trevor started to feel agitated deep down in his heart, afraid that, as all the people he loved ended up abandon him, Michael had acted in the same way.

Then, he asked a waiter if he had seen his friend and told him that he went out of the bar with a "big guy".

"What? A big guy?" – he mumbled, puzzled, and left the bar to look for his friend.

February 5th, 1990 12:30 a.m.

"Here, take it! I swear it's all the money I have!" — said Michael after taking from the ATM one hundred dollars. Michael intended to give the cash to the biker with the palm of his left hand extended, but just when the biker was about to take it, Michael tried to punch in his face with the other hand that was hidden in his pocket. Nevertheless, being that guy taller than him, Michael could barely reach his face, and the most he could do was to punch in his abdomen, but, with all that flab, it didn't make any effect on the rider. Laughing loudly, the biker replied:

"So, you ain't gonna pay for the jacket and, worse still, you wanted to cheat on me, huh? Well, let me tell ya that I didn't feel a shit, pathetic wimp! Look and learn, pussy! This is how you have to PUNCH SOMEONE IN DA FACE!".

And then, in the blink of an eye, the biker proceeded to hit several times with his big, ringed fists in Michael's face with such fury that left him semi-unconscious in the cold pavement, bleeding profusely through the nose.

"See? That's how you fight, hahaha! And now, for the final lesson..."

The biker took out a quite small but impressive motorbike-shaped knife made in bright silver with the letters 'AD' scarved on its surface and got dangerously closer to Michael's face,

who was gasping and sweating intensively.

"Please...don't...don't do it..." – he said under his breath.

"Prepare to receive a little *souvenir* you won't ever forget, courtesy from the "Angels of Death Motorbike Club"! – the biker laughed wickedly.

01:00 a.m.

Trevor, after looking for Michael exasperatedly around the area of the bar, finally found him in an obscure alley nearby accompanied by the biker. He observed the whole scene of Michael being knocked out by that beast in leather and got furious when he saw Michael lying on the ground. If there was a thing in the world that Trevor couldn't stand was seeing how the people important to him -in this case, his dear friend and love- were getting hurt, even if those beloved ones were *pussies*. But Michael was *his* pussy.

In a quick thought, Trevor took an empty bottle from the ground and screamed:

"HEY! YOU! LEAVE MY FRIEND ALONE!".

"Huh? Who the fuck are—"

Before the biker could finish the sentence, Trevor, who was skinnier than Michael, and thus more agile, ran as fast as lightning, jumped, and crashed the bottle with all his energy in the biker's head, from where blood started to trickle. The biker, swaying, put his hand on the head and saw scared his own blood.

"AHHH! What the-? Fucking shrimp! You will pay for this!".

"Come on, cupcake, make me suffer!".

Then, both men fought for several minutes; Trevor doing his best to avoid the biker's slow but strong movements, while Michael was spectating the fight, helpless. At a certain moment, the biker took Trevor by the neck with his ursine arms and started to choke him.

Trevor struggled to be released and kicked him strongly in the knees, and both fell to the ground. At a glance, he saw a piece of splinter near him and grabbed it, driving it directly into the biker's neck. The stake penetrated the biker's jugular, causing blood to spurt like an oil well, but, with his last breath, the biker also stabbed Trevor in the abdomen with the beautiful but deadly knife he was carrying, and both lied on the ground, one dead, and the other writhing in pain.

01:30 a.m.

Past midnight, snow started to fall, and silence ruled in the alley. A little snowflake that fell on Michael's face made him wake up, whose nose and cheeks were still aching from the fight. He tried to recall what had happened on that odd night, but in his mind, everything was confusing. Michael looked around dazed and found Trevor near him, who was lying in a pool of blood. The breathing sound of both men was camouflaged rapidly by the police sirens that were coming towards they were. It happened that a hobo who was passing by the passage found the bloodied cadaver of the biker near where Michael and Trevor were lying, and without thinking it twice, ran to the police station to report the crime.

Michael managed to get to his feet and went up to his injured friend. Terrified, he saw the deep wound that Trevor had in the abdomen, which was squirting blood constantly, and the dirty coat he was wearing was already soaked in the red liquid. However, Trevor didn't seem impressed by the magnitude of his injury.

"Phew, that guy was as big as a building! I think I've dealt with that fruity-leather-jacket wearing asshole, huh, Mikey? – said Trevor looking at the corpse of the biker with a triumphal smirk on his face – "But what the fuck did you do to make him mad?"

"I spilled by accident my whisky on his fine jacket...".

"What the hell!? As far as I know, you're not the type of person who would commit such clumsiness, M" – stated Trevor scratching his head.

"Yeah, I didn't know what I was thinking about... - Michael looked down in embarrassment. "I'm sorry, T, for having involved you in this stupid situation... it's all my fault". "It's ok, Mikey. I'm more than used to *getting hurt*, so this is nothing for me – assured Trevor unconcerned, brushing the dirt off his shoulders with his hand. "If I hadn't shown up, now you would look like an Emmental cheese, hehe".

"I know, T. Thank you. I guess I owe you now..." – said Michael, smiling warmly at Trevor - We gotta go, it looks like someone alerted the police and now they may be searching for us" – he looked around nervously.

"Ugh, fuckin' cops, always breathing on our necks! we can't celebrate properly after doing a good job... –muttered Trevor with disdain – oh, hey, look what a beautiful *present* gave me that biker! – he pointed out at his wound with an excited tone in his voice.

"Fuck... I should take you to the hospital, T, but we can't take the risk right now. For the time being, put some pressure on the injury to stop the bleeding. I'll cure it when we reach the motel. Come on, move quickly!" - Michael helped to raise Trevor and both ran, while they heard the sirens of the police cars nearer and nearer.

Michael approached the first car he saw (a rusty and sky-blue colored Albany Emperor from the 80s), as quickly as possible broke the window, and made a hot-wire to start the engine. Due that Michael began the criminal life by stealing cars when he was just a teenager, by this time, making a hot-wire was a piece of cake for him. He helped Trevor to enter the car and they began their trip back to the motel where they were staying, located one hour away from the center of the town.

02:00 a.m.

The snow was falling heavier than before on the lonely and frozen road. Together with the sound of the howling wind that was entering through the broken window, the clattering sound of the motor flooded the environment. Michael, who was driving as quickly and concentrated as possible, occasionally looked at Trevor to check his state. Although he was a mess of shivers and blood, surprisingly still had enough stamina to sing along to "Lord of the Thighs" by Aerosmith.

"Hey, Mikey...You can say that it was knife to meet that motherfucker, eh? It was such a fla-

ttering meeting, he left me in this STABle condition...Hahaha!"— a mischievous grin crossed Trevor's face, much to Michael's astonishment. Was Trevor by any chance making bad jokes about his serious health condition? God, sometimes Trevor's dark humor was excessive for Michael, and he just rolled his eyes in disapproval.

He kept driving until, out of nowhere, two police cars appeared in the middle of the cross-roads blocking the road, and an officer shouted by the megaphone: "STOP THE CAR IM-MEDIATELY!".

Seeing they were cornered, Michael didn't have another option than to swerve the car violently and cross by the train tracks, being followed by three more police cars. He reached to a forest, and, in an attempt to avoid the trees, rocks, animals, and other obstacles that were appearing in the middle of their way, Michael had to make sharp turns, which caused Trevor to bump against the door of the car, hurting him more.

"Ouch! Mikey! Be careful with your patient, eh!".

"Shut the fuck up, Trevor! I'm trying to stay focused! Do me a fucking favor and put on your seatbelt, will ya?" – commanded Michael notably stressed. Trevor let out a grunt as a complaint and did what Michael ordered.

After they crossed the forest, they arrived at a frozen lake. As the car was crossing it, due to its weight, the snow-covered area started to crack and the water leaked through the ice, breaking it into big blocks. The police, seeing that they wouldn't be able to cross the lake without sinking their cars, had to give up chasing Michael and Trevor.

"Woohoo! – howled Trevor - I think we've lost'em!".

Michael, still vigilant, added: "So it seems...".

Despite that Trevor had been pressing the wound to stop the hemorrhage with his bare hands during their bumpy journey to the motel, he realized it was useless, as blood kept flowing unceasingly. However, he didn't say anything to not worry Michael, who was clearly troubled because another police patrol could stop them at any time.

After a while, a big glowing sign saying "Hot Springs Motel "(how ironic was that name in one of the coldest regions of the country) appeared on the horizon as they got closer, which indicated that they had arrived at their destination.

03:30 a.m.

When Michael parked outside the motel, he breathed a sigh of relief when he saw that, for now, the danger had passed and helped Trevor to get off the car. Trevor pretended to be in good shape and tried to walk by himself to the room, but, after several steps, his legs failed him, and almost fell to the ground. Fortunately, Michael was fast enough to grab him strongly by the arm and said with amusement "easy and steady, T, you're not as tough as you think you are", to which Trevor answered making a pout.

Michael opened the screeching door of the room and told Trevor to sit down in the small and filthy bed and searched around the room for a first-aid kit, but there wasn't any. He thought of going to the reception desk of the motel to ask if they had one, but rethinking the situation, it would be suspicious to request for medical tools to cure a stab wound as they had to stay low. Also, a glance at his watch told him that it was not the most appropriate time to do it. Then, he decided to make a provisional tourniquet, being aware that sooner rather than later he would need to do something more than simply plugging the wound.

While Michael was lost in his thoughts, Trevor stayed in silence in the bed observing the nervous behavior of his pal, as well as his blue eyes blinking nervously, his trembling hands covered in dry blood, and his sexy and masculine voice mumbling something about going to a drug store to acquire some medicines. The more he observed him, the more was convinced that he was in love with him, but also the more he looked at him, the more he suffered, knowing that the love of his life was going to date a hooker he met by chance in a shithole of a club, and that situation made Trevor terribly sad and frustrated.

"If there were a way to change his mind..." - he thought.

His fantasies were interrupted by a command from Michael, who told him to get rid of his shirt to make a tourniquet, but, when he intended in the first place to raise his arms to take his blood-stained coat off, he realized he couldn't move a single inch without feeling an intense sharp pain in the left side of his stomach.

"Auch! Mikey, could you help me...? I'm...I'm worse than I thought" –said Trevor in a low voice, visibly ashamed.

"Haha, who's the pussy now, T? Alright, let me help ya".

Michael approached Trevor and removed his coat gently. Then, he enclosed Trevor with his arms and started to unbutton his shirt at a slow pace. While Michael was focused on that task, Trevor could feel his warm puffs of breath and his rhythmical heartbeat so close in his ear that Trevor's heart was like a horse galloping inside his chest.

When Michael finished undoing the shirt and removed it, he saw boils caused by what seemed cigarettes burns decorating his best friend's back, like shining stars on a dark night. Although Michael had seen Trevor half-naked many times when goofing around or just when changing clothes, this scenery impressed him, due that it was the first time he could see in full detail Trevor's physical traumas he experienced when he was a child, being abused by who -he believed- was his father.

"If only there were a way to relieve his pain..." - thought Michael.

Afterward, Michael grabbed kindly Trevor's waist and laid him down in the bed. He took some gnawed bed sheets from the wardrobe and tore them into long stripes, creating a bandage, and tied it around Trevor's abdomen. Eventually, Michael got so close to Trevor's face while performing the procedure that caused him to sweat intensively. Michael, noticing that something was wrong with Trevor, whispered near his ear:

"Jesus Christ, Trev, you're shaking like a fucking leaf".

"I-it's n-nothing". – stammered Trevor.

Michael, reluctant to believe it was "nothing", put his hand in Trevor's forehead, and discovered he had a high fever.

"You're burning, T".

"Yes, I'm burning with love for you..." - thought Trevor.

Without thinking it twice, Michael stood up and went to the bathroom, bringing with him some towels and a bowl with cold water. He took a chair and sat down by Trevor's side, soaked a towel in the water, and put it on his hot forehead. Trevor, surprised by the fact that his friend devoted himself to looking after him - he was the only person in the world who was actually worried about his fate-, felt how his heart was going to burst in love for him. Therefore, in an involuntary impulse, he sat up and gave Michael a loving hug, saying in a (rarely heard) sweet, soft voice:

"Thank you for taking care of me, Mikey".

Michael didn't expect that behavior coming from Trevor, and noticed how his cheeks turned scarlet when he felt the warmness of Trevor's body invading his skin and his brown, long hair tickling him in the ear.

"I-it's ok, Trevor. W-we're...we're brothers, after all, right?" - he said, awkwardly.

Wait, why his heart started to thump so strong inside his chest? And most importantly, why he felt a pulsing and tingling sensation in his crotch as if he was getting a semi? As far as Michael could remember, Trevor has held him many times during these two years, due that he always complained to be "really lonely", and, concerning Michael, he didn't mind to satisfy his best friend's wishes in that sense, so both used to spend a lot of time cuddling and teasing each other while planning heists together. But now, everything had changed, and Michael couldn't grasp the reason for getting so nervous with *a simple hug*.

At this moment, a daring thought crossed Trevor's feverish mind.

"What if...?

If I'm gonna die soon, I'm willing to take the risk...

I just want to taste those juicy lips of yours, Mikey...

I've always wanted to do it...

It ain't a bad thing, isn't it?

Let... me... kiss...you...Mikey.

Just... once...
...Grant me my last wish."

And without any warning, Trevor grabbed Michael's nape firmly and gave him a long, passionate kiss. Michael, who didn't see that coming, was unable to make a move or say anything. With his eyes open, he could notice drops of sweat (or tears?) shading from Trevor's eyes, as well as he was able to sense the dry and chapped lips of his dear friend, which had an indescribable taste of blood, cheap beer, weed, and saliva. Similarly, he could feel Trevor's smooth tongue dancing inside his mouth, and smell his *peculiar aroma* so close that flourished in all the corners of his nostrils, penetrating his brain like a good line of coke. These stimuli triggered Michael a myriad of sensations he had never felt with any other girl before, and, indeed, far from being freaked out by the whole situation, Michael felt *extremely good and comfortable*.

Once his lips were separated from Trevor's ones, Michael didn't know if he was in paradise, in hell, or on an acid trip, but if there's one thing he was sure about, was that **it had been the best kiss he'd received in his short life.**

Trevor made a naughty smile and said: "Wow, Mikey, I didn't know you were so good at kissing", and suggestively licked his lips.

After some brief moments of elation, Michael returned to Earth again from that weird dream and headed his hand to his mouth in shock.

"WHAT...WHAT THE FUCK WAS THAT, TREVOR? ARE YOU NUTS?" – he snapped at Trevor.

Without saying anything else, Michael took his gun, the red hockey mask he used in yesterday's heist, and left the room slamming the door before he could hear Trevor bewildered shouting behind him: "Hey, where the fuck are you going? Come here, let's talk! MI-CHAEL!".

03:45 a.m.

Michael got on the car and sighed deeply, looking at his reflection in the rear-view mirror. He felt dazed, a spiral of thoughts coming to his troubled mind. Until that moment, he hadn't had any doubt about his sexual orientation, being sure he was attracted *only* to women, in contrast to Trevor, who told him that he had had several affairs and booty calls with both men and women whenever he got the chance. But on the night he was deliciously kissed by his friend Trevor Philips, he felt that all his strong beliefs about him being *straight* were falling apart, and, as a result, he was terrified by thinking he hadn't only betrayed his moral principles, but also let his strict catholic mother down.

For an instant, he thought of returning to the room and tell Trevor that he was really confused because for the first time in his life he liked being caressed by a man and was starting to feel *something strong* about him, but, simultaneously, he was sure he'd fallen in love with Amanda and, as a result, he didn't want to hurt her. However, in the last second, he shook his head side to side and instead tried to convince himself that Trevor's actions were a mere product of delirium caused by the fever.

Although he had left the motel some time ago, he still could hear Trevor screaming inside his head: "Mikey, are you gonna leave me here alone and run, like you always do!?". "Fuck! Enough of thinking about Trevor, Michael! You know perfectly that he's fucking horny and deranged 24/7, plus he has a twisted sense of humor, so that kiss was a joke, an awful joke of him, right? He didn't mean it!" – thought out loud.

He turned on the radio in an attempt to relax and distract his chaotic mind, but, as a sort of a cosmic joke, the DJ introduced the ballad "Listen to your Heart" by Roxette, which was a total hit in 1988, the year he met Trevor, and it was precisely one of those cheesy songs that Michael liked to sing aloud just to annoy him on their trips across the country.

"I know there's something in the wake of your smile I get a notion from the look in your eyes, yeah You've built a love, but that love falls apart (...)

Sometimes you wonder if this fight is worthwhile

The precious moments are all lost in the tide, yeah They've swept away, and nothing is what it seems The feeling of belonging to your dreams
Listen to your heart when he's calling for you (...)"

As the lyrics were sticking into Michael's head and his brain unconsciously started to connect them to his own experiences, with the flash image of Trevor kissing him blurring his vision, Michael couldn't stand listening more to the song so, with tears in his eyes, he turned off the radio and step on the gas, decided not to torture himself more about the situation. Rather, he tried to focus on finding a drug store to get those goddamn medicines for Trevor, using the gun he was carrying in his pocket if it was necessary.

04:15 a.m.

Trevor found himself searching for Michael in the middle of a beautiful field covered in snow, running and shouting to the void.

"Michael, why are you hurting me like this? Why don't you love me like I love you? Please, don't go away! First, it was my mother, and now you?" – screamed Trevor, crying and sobbing like a baby.

"Michael, where are you?!" – his words were echoing in the distance, but no one answered. He kneeled down, tired of running and feeling powerless. "Mikey, you're an idiot! Are you gonna leave me for that bitch called Amanda!? I hate you! You fucking pork chop, I hate you with all my-".

Suddenly, an image of Michael appeared in front of his eyes in the middle of the field, smoking his favorite Redwood cigarettes, with a sweet smile on his face – the smile that made Trevor go crazy-, and he whispered a short phrase, but Trevor couldn't hear it. Trevor stood up and started to run to reach him, but then, the ground under Michael started to break. Trevor ran as quickly as his legs allowed him, but the ground was splitting more and more under his feet, and before he could arrive, Michael faded away into the darkness.

"MICHAEL! Wait! NOOOOO!"

Trevor woke up screaming in the middle of the night, panting and soaked in sweat and tears that were rolling down his pale cheeks, with a strong blood flavor in his mouth. The room was in complete darkness, only filled with the sound of Trevor's gasps, along with the wind that was hitting the window.

He stayed for a long time gazing at the moldy ceiling of the walls, disoriented. Like the nightmare he had, Michael wasn't with him, after all.

"So you finally got away after I had the balls to kiss you, like the pussy you are, huh?" said in a husky voice.

He looked at his torso and saw a big bloodstain on the bandage, which meant that the wound was still bleeding so copiously that blood started to seep out of the tourniquet, staining even the bedsheets.

"What the hell? It looks like I'm having the period through my belly...".

At a certain moment, Trevor felt the urge to grab something to drink as he felt his throat was as dry as a bone, but, when he intended to get up from the bed, he felt such an acute pinching pain in his abdomen that didn't allow him to move a muscle without having the sensation that he was going to split in two parts. Trevor thought about waiting patiently until Michael came back to help him, as much as he hated to be helped by others because he had always been independent, but this time he felt he really needed another person's hand, and what was better than holding Michael's big and warm hand, the only person he had truly loved in his life?

However, as the minutes passed by and Michael didn't enter by the door, he started feeling worse and worse: the abdominal pain didn't cease (along with his heartache), he was feeling dizzier than before and he started to tremble uncontrollably.

"Fuck! What's wrong with me? Calm the fuck down, T!" – he tried to encourage himself, but it was in vain. Along with the intense tremors and the cold sweat, a cough came, and then

another, and another. He looked at his hand and, horrified, saw a blood clot in the palm of his hand.

He was coughing blood.

It was at that moment when he realized these could be his last moments on Earth, and in case Michael never came again for him, Trevor got an idea: he thought about expressing everything he always wanted to tell to Michael by writing him a letter, not because he didn't have the chance, but because, in reality, he was never brave enough to confess to him his true feelings about how much he loved him and wanted to stay by his side every day of his life.

Then, making a huge effort, Trevor got up from the bed, but the sharp pain stroked him again with such violence that made him fall to the floor. Panting, he dragged his injured body as he could to the suitcase that he and Michael carried to every place they went, filled with clothes and other stuff they consider could be useful for their heists, and searched for some paper and a pen. Seeing he couldn't find them anywhere, he held his breath to cope with the severe pain that was nearly unbearable, got up, and walked slowly to the desk, where he could find a blue ink pen and some paper with a ridiculous slogan printed on its surface: "Find happiness at Hot Springs Motel!". Trevor started to write the letter for Michael, but what was supposed to be a mundane task became the hardest in the world, not only due to both mental and physical pain he was feeling but due to the big tears filling his eyes that impeded him to see clearly, without mentioning the exaggerated shivers that made more difficult to write something moderately legible. After spending a whole eternity, Trevor, weeping noisily, managed to finish the letter for Michael and hid it someplace in the suitcase.

04:30 a.m.

Meanwhile, Michael kept driving through the solitary road, with the only illumination of the full moon that appeared behind the clouds in that dark and cold night. He was convinced he couldn't return to the town, as the police may be still investigating the area for the murder of the biker, so his only choice was to find another drug store or pharmacy nearby the motel. Unfortunately for him, the most he could see was the snow reflected in the pave-

ment, without any signs of a drug store.

After driving for half an hour, he decided to stop the car at the side of the road for a moment to take a break and think about his next step. He felt tired, hungry, and stressed out, so he couldn't resist lighting a cigarette. Michael giggled as he took out his lighter, remembering how ironic was the fact that Trevor insisted on Michael quitting that shit, precisely coming from a person which habits were huffing gas, smoking weed, and injecting substances that Michael hadn't even heard of in his life. He was giving the cigarette a deep puff when he saw something that caught his attention.

"Isn't that a...blue and red lighting sign of O'Deas Pharmacy? In the middle of nowhere? It's my lucky day!"- He exclaimed.

After giving the last drag, Michael threw away the cigarette and started the car, which made a strange sound, but at that moment he didn't give it any importance, being focused on going as fast as he could to the pharmacy. Nevertheless, when he was around a mile before he arrived at his destination, the motor started to make weird noises and went slower and slower until stopped completely, with a big cloud of white smoke coming out from it.

He tried several times to start up the engine again, but it was impossible to make it work. He came out of the car and kicked it with rage while screaming "Fucking junk! Why it had to break down just now!?". He put his hands on his head in desperation, fearing that every minute he was late Trevor was closer to death. As he was the only person on the road and couldn't wait for somebody to pick up him, he had to go on foot to the drug store.

Twenty minutes later, he finally arrived at the pharmacy exhausted, but if the breakdown of the car wasn't enough bad luck, he discovered the supposedly 24/7 store was closed. Although he had sufficient money obtained in the previous heist to buy medicines, he couldn't waste more time looking for another open store. He put on his mask to not be recognized and, grabbing a brick from the ground, he threw it to the shop window, which was broken into a thousand shards but activated the burglar alarm. He entered the shop and searched as quickly as he could in all the compartments for all the medical elements he thought could be useful not only to treat Trevor's wound now but for the future: alcohol, (a whole lot of) *deludamol*, bandages, intravenous saline drip, needles, surgical stitches, among

other things. He put all the stuff in a bag he carried with him and left the store as fast as the wind before someone came.

Keeping in mind that Michael had abandoned the old Emperor in the middle of the road, he had to get another car. Nevertheless, as he hadn't had enough in that crazy night, two policemen that were patrolling a gas station nearby the pharmacy store were alerted by the alarm and saw Michael stealing the vehicle.

When Michael got in the car and saw a police patrol with two cops inside coming directly to him, he hesitated for a moment which would be his next step. He always had the strict code to not kill anyone if it wasn't a life or death matter, but, precisely, that behavior of Michael was something that irritated Trevor more than anything else, causing them to have continuous arguments about their radically different methods of doing heists, which normally ended with crossed accusations of one being a 'coward' and the other a 'maniac that killed innocent people without any remorse'. Even so, this was one of those times when he had to decide whether it was him being killed or to kill others to survive and save his dying friend. And he chose the latter.

He took a deep breath, rolled his neck, and prepared himself mentally to play the role of "the bad guy". Closing firmly his eyes, he drew his gun and fired through the window of the police car, killing the officers in a blink of the eye with just one shot to their heads. Michael executed the action with such swiftness that impeded the two poor policemen to make a call for reinforcements. He looked at their faces with an expressionless gaze and said: "Sorry about that, guys, but I gotta save my friend", and returned to the motel that was one hour and a half approximately from the pharmacy, praying that Trevor would be still alive by the time he came back.

06:30 a.m.

After a snowy night, the first sunbeams of the morning percolated through the grayish clouds, illuminating the entire sky. At the end of what seemed an eternal journey, Michael finally arrived at the dingy motel, and while he was going upstairs to the room, he said euphorically:

"Trevor, buddy! I-I've returned from the drug store! – he gasped, almost without breath – "Look, I... I got all the things needed to cure you!".

"Trevor...?".

When he entered the room, he found Trevor unconscious on the floor near the desk. He was so stunned by the scene that he dropped the bag and ran to where Trevor was lying. "No, no, no! For fuck's sake, TREVOR!".

Michael took Trevor's hand and checked his wrist pulse, to find it was so weak he could barely feel it. Then, he shook Trevor exasperatedly to wake up him, without success. But nothing happened.

Was he dead?

No. No way.

Trevor Philips just couldn't die, not like this, not today. They still had to pull off many more heists together, visit more places of the country, do more crazy shit together, watch many more movies... Michael remembered perfectly that Trevor told him several times he was nicknamed Trevor "Steel" Philips for his everlasting strength, so this just couldn't be happening.

For Michael, Trevor not only was his friend; he was his confidant, his partner in crime, the only person in this world which he could trust blindly because, although he always regarded Trevor as a *crazy* person since the first time they met, he knew perfectly that under all those layers of instability, anger, horniness, traumas, and pain, inhabited a *nice person* with good feelings and emotions. And now, that special person for him was hovering between life and death.

What else Michael could do? He had to think quickly, as every second counted, but his mind resembled a merry-go-round of incoherent thoughts.

He tried to consider all the available options and came up with his last chance:

A mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

Michael's heart was in his mouth just by thinking about it. He put his hands to his temples and closed firmly his eyes, trembling and whining.

"No, no, no, but how on Earth I could kiss a man? That's no good. Mom used to say that's a mortal sin, and I'd go to Hell if I ever do something like that. He kissed me once because he's fuckin' insane, you know, but I can't do it, I can't, I can't!".

"But Trevor's gonna die! Come on, Michael, you know that's not a real kiss! The life of your best friend is hanging by a thread. You will regret it every day of your life if you don't do it. Are you going to let your best friend die just for masculine pride, for real? It's true what he says about you, you're a pussy, and you'll always be one".

"Alright, fucking-A! I'll show you that I'm no pussy! Let's go! One, two...three!".

Gathering up all the courage he had, Michael proceeded to open delicately Trevor's mouth, press his nose, and approached his trembling lips to Trevor's cold ones, and gave him a kiss, **the kiss of life.**

Michael waited impatiently for Trevor to react to his desperate measure, and luckily, the miracle happened: a warm puff of breath, accompanied by a rhythmical rise and fall of his chest indicated that Trevor was breathing, still alive.

"Thank you, my Lord. Thank you for saving my friend", said Michael, relieved.

Taking the chance that Trevor was unconscious, Michael proceeded to cure the wound using the material he stole from the pharmacy. He put on a pair of latex gloves, cut with scissors the bloody tourniquet made with the bedsheets, and once the wound showed up in all its splendor...Michael almost throw up because of the decomposed smell that was coming out from *there*. Certainly, the injury didn't only smell revolting, but looked awful, festering, and bleeding with a dark red color. Trying to contain nausea he felt was coming through his throat, he examined it carefully using forceps and found that the biker's knife had stabbed profoundly into the flesh, damaging blood vessels and who knows if internal organs as well,

as he wasn't able -or didn't have the guts- to look deeper into it.

Seeing that the situation for Trevor had gotten much worse than Michael had thought at first, he didn't have another choice than to take him to a hospital, much to his concern and fear, due that the police may still be looking for them. In consequence, he decided to close the wound provisionally by making another tourniquet. He applied alcohol in the area to disinfect it, and, once it was perfectly clean, he pinched the wound together and put several butterfly bandages on the surface. To finish the operation, he wrapped the injury with some gauze and fastened it with a strip of adhesive tape. Finally, Michael checked Trevor's temperature with a thermometer, putting it in his armpit: it marked 103.1°, which indicated his fever had increased dangerously and used a towel to clean Trevor's sweaty face.

After he finished that job, he lifted Trevor up carefully by the arm and piggybacked him to the car. Once Michael placed Trevor in the back seat, he came back to the room to pack quickly their belongings and put them in the trunk. Afterward, he left the key and the money corresponding for two nights at the reception desk, which, strangely enough, was still deserted. He came back to the car and left the motel in the direction of the hospital located in the town where that frenzied night started.

11:00 a.m.

Approximately three hours had passed since Michael arrived in a rush at the emergencies of the local hospital, due that Trevor's condition was critical and started to convulse violently on their way to the medical center. After the doctors examined him, the result was that he had suffered a hypovolemic shock due that the knife stab had ripped part of the spleen and the stomach, causing an internal hemorrhage and, consequently, he had to receive an emergency operation, as he was in high risk of death. Now, Michael found himself pacing around from one side to the other of the waiting room, expectant for Trevor.

After Michael got tired of walking around, he sat down and started to rummage in the suit-case, just to kill the time. He found an album that contained a bunch of Polaroids they had taken during their trips as mementos that Michael always enjoyed looking at whenever he was bored. These "precious moments" for Trevor and him actually framed all kind of funny, surreal, and bizarre situations that someone could ever imagine: Trevor running drunk

and naked around Vice City, Trevor pissing from a cliff while watching the sunset, a photo of Michael with obscene messages on his face written by Trevor while he was sleeping, another one of Trevor giving a hitchhiker the finger, Michael caught in the bathroom taking a dump, Trevor dressed up as Santa Claus in reindeer printed briefs with shining sparklers in his hand, Trevor wearing a pink dress doing a sensual dance at a club, a red-eyed Michael smoking weed and giving the V-sign, and much, much more.

When Michael reached the last page of the album, he found a paper folded carelessly with bloody fingerprints on its surface and crumpled as if someone wanted to throw out it but at the last moment regretted it. Michael unfolded the paper and found out that it was a letter composed by Trevor, but since it was written messily -Trevor always had terrible handwriting- and the blue ink was smudged in some parts with what seemed drops of tears and blood, was even more difficult to read it. Michael started to read the writing with a lump in his throat, being unable to contain the shakiness of his hands and feeling in his inner ear the thundering noise of his heart.

FEVRUARY 1990

DEAR MIKEY:

FCK, IT FEELS SO WEIRD WRITIN A LETER 2 SOMEI U WERE JUST W/ ...



BUT I GUES DIS IS DA ONLY WAY I CAN XPRES MY FEELINS ABOUT U BE4 I LEAVE DIS TURD CALED EARTH. DEI SAY DATS IMPORTANT 2 TELL OFEN WAT U ZINK BOUT UR BELOVED ONES BECOS U NEVER NO WEN COUD B DA LAST TAIM U CAN SEE DEM, SO DIS IS DA PERFECT MOMENT 2 DO IT, ISN T IT? U NO DAT I VE NEVR GIVN A FUK 'BOUT GRAMAR SPELIN AND ALL DAT BUL\$HIT SO I HOPE U CAN UNDRSTAND WAT I WANNA SAY.

U REMEMBER DAT AWSOME DEI OF SUMER WEN WE WENT 2 DA BEACH IN LIBERTI CITI AND I SAW U NAKED 4 DA IST TIME BECOS U HAVNT GOT A DAMN SUIMSUIT?? MAN, UR FACE WAS AS RED AS A TURKY COK I ALMOST PIS MYSELF OF LAUGH! HAHAHAH! WAT A WUSSY, BEING AL SHAI W/ UR BEST FRIEND! ANIWAY, I SWEAR U WERE FCKIN HANDSOM, AND UR EYES WERE SPECIALY BEAUTIFUL DAT DAY, DEEP BLU LAIK DA SEA... EVN 4 A PORC CHOP LIKE U, UR BODI REMAINDS ME OF DOSE GREK GODS FROM DA GEI PORN ZINES... STRONG BIG WARM...AND I DON T MEAN ONLY BOUT UR DICK IF IS DAT WAT UR ZINKIN ABOUT!! U DIRTY MINDED!

WATEVER, I ALSO REKALL WE HAD DINER AT A BURGR SHOT IN ALGONKUIN AND I DUNNO WAT THE HEL I TOLD U DAT I MADE U LAUGH SO MUCH U SPILED SPRUNK TROUGH UR NOSE. WAT A LOSER! BUT YISUS, U WERE DRIVING ME CRAZI WITH DAT STUPID BUT PRETY SMILE OF URS. AND AFTER DAT WE WENT TO THE CINEMA WHERE WE WATCHED 4 DA 30ST TIME DAT BORIN ASS MOVIE U LIKE SO MUCH, NELSON IN NAPLS, AND THEN WE ENJOYED DA NAIT VIU OF LC FROM A CHOPER I STOLE BE4. UR FEIS WAS SO RADIANT, DELIGHTED W/ THE LAITS OF THE SKAISCRAPERS. AND I COULDN'T TAKE MY EYES OFF OF U (DON'T ZINK IM A STALKER OR A CREEP PLS!). IN FACT, I DON'T LIE WEN I SAY IT WAS I OF DA BEST NAITS OF MY LAIF, AND IT WAS GREIT BECOS U WERE W/ ME.

DO U REMEMBER AS WELL DA IST TIME WE MET 2 YEARS AGO NEAR DA KANADA BORDER WHERE WE DID DAT KARGO JOB? BAK IN DOSE DAYS, I WAS RUNIN LAIK A HEADLES CHICKN WEN I GOT KIKD OUT OF DA RAF, BANGIN, KILIN, EATIN, SHITIN, HAVIN FUN WIZOUT CONTROL...I TRIED EVRYTHIN TO FIL DIS FUKIN HOLE IN MY CHEST, BUT IT WAS USELES. AND DEN ONE DAY U DESCENDED FROM HEAVEN AND SHOWD ME DERE WAS STIL HOPE FOR ME, AN ANGREE HOTHEAD WHO WAS LIVIN IN A HELL CALLD DESPAIR. U WERE DA ONLY PERSON IN DA WORLD WHO ACEPTED ME 4 WHO I AM. WEN EBERYBODY ELSE CONSIDERED ME A WEIRDO OR A PSYKO AND LEFT ME ALON, U VE BEEN THERE BY MY SIDE AL DA TAIM. ZANKS 2 U, I COULD FIND A PURPOSE IN MY FUKED UP LAIF AND MOR IMPORTANTLY U GAVE ME A REASON TO STEI ALIVE. IN OTHER WRDS U SAVED ME, MICHAEL, AND I ZINK I NEVER WIL BE ABLE TO ZANK U ENOUGH 4 DAT.

GOD I FEEL LAIK AN ASHOLE CRYIN WHILE I WRITE DIS... I GUESS I LL BE ALWAYS A CRAIBEIBI UGH

BUT NOW IM SLOWLY DYIN IN DIS FLEABAG AND I CAN T DO ANYZING ELSE BUT TELIN U HOW LUKY I WAS TO MEET U DAT DAY AT DA BORDR AND 2 SHARE AL THE UNFORGETABLE MOMENTS WE VE SPENT DURING OUR TRIPS TOGEDER. IF IM ONEST W/ YA, IT FELT LAIK A KIK ON DA BALS WEN U TOLD ME YESTERDAY DAT U D FALLEN IN LUV WITH A HOOKER AND U WERE GONA ASK HER FOR A DATE. I DON T LIE IF I SAY I M XTREMELY YEALOUS OF HER BECOS SHE S GONNA BE UR GIRLFRIEND. U DON T KNOU HOW MENY TIMES I PIKTURED IN MY HEAD I KISED U AND I HELD YOUR WARM HAND WHILE WE WALKED TOGEDER AND TALKED ABOUT LAIF, LIEK IN DOSE \$HITY ROMANTIC MOVIES WE VE WATCHED. BUT LAIF IS UNFAIR AND I HATE IT!!

Find Latities at Hot Springs Motel!

I ALSO HATE U 4 BEING A TURD AND A PUSI ALL DA TIMES WE VE PULED OF A JOB AND U VE INSISTED IN DOIN IT WITHOUT KILINS, RUNING AWAY AND KIPIN A LOW PROFILE U NO DAT??? I HATE U AS MUCH AS I HATE MYSELF!

BUT AT DA SAME TAIM I LUV U.

I LUV U W/ ALL MY FKIN HEART AND SOUL, MICHAEL TOWNLEY. I LUV U MORE DAN BOOZE, MORE DAN LOVE FIST, MORE DAN SUITMEETS AND I LUV U ALMOST AS MUCH AS MY PRECIOUS MODER AND DATS A LOT TO SAY!

DA TRUTH IS DAT I M NOT AFRAID OF DYIN BC IS DA NATURAL CICLE OF LAIF.

RADER I WAS AFRAID OF NOT BEING ABLE TO CONFES I LUV U, AND NOW DAT I

FINALY COULD DO IT I FEEL LAIK THIS HEAVI BURDN I WAS FEELIN INSIDE IS GONE

AND I CAN DIE IN PEACE. U R WAT I VE ALWAIS EVR LONGED 4, AND U CAN B SURE

DAT U LL BE IN MY MIND TIL MY LAST BREATH.

I WANT 2 FINISH DIS LETER W/ UR FAVORITE KUOTE FROM DAT STUPID KLASIC MOVIE HOOSE NAME I DON T REMEMBER: U FORGET A 1000 THINGS EVRY DEI, MAKE SUR DIS IS I OF'EM. I HOPE U CAN 4GET EVRYTHING BOUT ME AND 4GET SOON DAT I LOVED U, SO U CAN LIVE HAPILY EVR AFTR W/ UR LVLY AMANDA.

WISHIN U AL DA BEST

TREVOR

PS: PLEEZ DON T VISIT MY TOMB WEN I BITE DA DUST. I DON T WANT U TO FEEL GUILTI BOUT ME.

PS 2: U CAN EIDER KEEP DA KAMERA AND DA POLAROIDS OR DESTROI DEM I DON T KARE ANYMOR.

FUCK DACOPS

DEATH
Find Poppiness at Hot Springs Motel!

When Michael finished reading the letter, he realized the paper was getting wet, and searching for the cause, it was due to his own tears that were falling untiringly. This situation was the last straw for Michael: first, in the same night, he got hugged and kissed by a male, and second, he read a letter where Trevor admitted he loved him *not only as a friend*, and that was a lot to digest for the poor Michael. At that moment, he felt the need to run away, cry, pull his hair out and scream to the top of his voice, but he repressed himself, as he was taught to do since he was a child.

Effectively, Michael, who had received a traditional education in which any conduct different from the strict commandments dictated by the Bible was considered as *moral depravity*, was right now in a dilemma: he could dump Amanda and confess to Trevor that he felt butterflies in his stomach when he got kissed by him OR he could pretend that everything that had happened in that night was the product of a terrifying nightmare, and hence forget it, as his friend ironically had encouraged him to do in the letter in the hypothetical case he died. He closed his eyes tightly, and, in the darkness, he heard those words from that old movie resonating in his mind, again and again:

"You forget one thousand things every day, make sure this is one of them".

But at that moment, unexpectedly, a familiar figure appeared in front of his eyes, wearing a black dress, and carrying a bible in their hand. It was the image of his mother, reprehending him:

"Michael, remember that homosexuality is an aberration under the eyes of our Lord, an evil product of a degenerate society! Therefore, a man who falls in love with another man is living in a state of sin and his soul will be condemned forever! A family is always formed by a woman and a man. You must forget about that Trevor and date Amanda. She's a good and beautiful girl, who has had a tough life, while Trevor is a killer and a psychopath. He'll only bring misfortune to you and put your life in danger, sooner or later. I know it's painful, but it's the right thing to do!".

After meditating so much that his head was about to burst about the warnings of his mother, he finally took the hardest and most painful decision ever.

"It's collateral damage. You'll thank me later, son." - she whispered in his ear.

With his hands trembling, he teared up the letter in little pieces and put it in the nearest trash bin he could find.

"I'm sorry, T. *I love you too*, but it's the best thing for us. I'm going to date Mandy no matter what happens". – mumbled Michael.

Then, he wiped away his tears, sighed intensely, and waited until Trevor's surgery had finished.

February 7th, 1990 08:00 a.m.

The only sound that could be heard in the white and clean room of the hospital was the beep sound of the vital signs monitor, as well as the bubbling sound of the oxygen machine. With the soft caress of the first sun's rays, Trevor slowly opened his eyes, and the first thing he saw was Michael sleeping in his lap while holding his hand tightly. Astonished, he lowered his gaze and saw all the cables and tubes that were attached to his body, as well as a big bandage that covered his abdomen. By observing the dark circles on Michael's face, Trevor realized that he hadn't separated from his side a second to look after him. After being in silence for some time, he finally opened his mouth, and in a hoarse voice, he mumbled:

"...M...Michael...?".

The voice of Trevor made Michael woke with a jump, who got closer to him and said, visibly emotional: "Yes, yes, Trevor, it's me!".

"What...happened? Where... am... I?" - Trevor looked around, disoriented.

"Tr-Trevor"- Michael sobbed - "You were almost dead when I found you in the motel room, so I had no other choice than to carry you to the hospital. The doctors operated on you of emergency, and you've been in a coma for two days. Thanks to the Lord that you finally woke up".

"Oh...really?" - a look of puzzlement crossed his face and added: "I don't remember anything".

"What is the last thing you remember?"

"Umm...when that...that fucking biker and I got into a fight to defend you, but nothing else".

"How strange, maybe we need-"

"Good morning! Did our sleeping handsome wake up finally?".

At that moment, a corpulent nurse with glasses and curly blonde hair in her fifties, who answered to the name of Rosaline Hopkins, entered the room to check Trevor's condition. After she examined meticulously the stitches of the wound, his vital signs, took his temperature, and performed other routine medical procedures, Michael took her by the arm and, pushing her aside to a corner, asked:

"Mrs. Rosaline, I want to ask you about Trevor's condition. Is it normal if he doesn't remember anything about what happened yesterday? He's always got an excellent memory. If I'm honest with you, I'm a bit worried about it...".

"Oh, don't worry about that, my dear, that's totally normal~! Your friend had suffered from dehydration and high fever for more than twelve hours, so those two factors can trigger amnesia, yes! – said the nurse with a melodious voice.

"Amnesia? But it's permanent?" – Michael looked at the woman with a startled expression on his face.

"Generally, it depends on the person, but if your friend can't remember anything by himself, maybe with your valuable help he'll be able to do it soon! Unless you want to keep what happened *on secret*... hee hee" – the nurse let out a mischievous giggle.

Michael got more anxious than before and stammered: "A-alright, thank you very much".

"You're welcome, honey! If you need anything, just call me and I'll come ASAP! I'll let you

boys alone to catch up on things. See you later, cutie~!" – the woman waved her hand at Trevor, gave Michael a saucy wink, and straightway left the room. Michael was intrigued by the behavior of that woman. What on earth was she thinking about *him and Trevor*?

"What were you and that nurse talking about, eh?" – asked Trevor with an inquiring look.

"Nothin'. Just asking how the surgery went and about the medical bills, you know".

"Huh...." – Trevor gave him a suspicious gaze but didn't say anything more.

"Anyways... You should rest and recover, T. Doctors say you've lost a lot of blood. It's a miracle that you're still alive".

"Heh...Of course I'm alive and kickin', Mikey! I'm Trevor-motherfucking- "Steel" Philips, don't forget that, amigo! A stab wound ain't enough to kill me" – stated Trevor.

"I know, you lucky asshole. Shut up - said Michael giggling - and sleep".

"I don't need to rest! I need to get into action again! Just you and me, M!". Trevor paraded around about how well he was feeling now and attempted to stand up from the bed: "I'm ready to do more scores and—AAH!" – he moaned in pain.

"See? Take it easy, pal. Doctors said that we still have to wait until the wound is fully healed. And don't fuckin' move, or the stitches could open, and you don't want that, do you? You must be a *good boy* for a few days more".

"Fuck you, Michael!" – hissed Trevor – "Ok, then...It's just boring to be here without doing nothing".

"You've always got ants in your pants, don't ya? Hahaha".

"You do know it very well, sweet cheeks". – said Trevor, biting his own lip seductively and gave him a lecherous gaze.

That nasty and random comment of Trevor caught Michael by surprise, who coughed and replied: "No, moron, I didn't mean it *in that way*", and both laughed like the two special friends they always were.

February 10th, 1990 11:00 a.m.

Finally, the day had come. That morning, the doctor who operated on Trevor showed up at his room and removed the stitches from his abdomen, which left a long, raspy, and rosy scar. By that time, Trevor was already recovered and could stand up, walk around the room, and run if he wanted. Michael observed him in silence the way he was examining the mark he got in his tummy in front of the mirror, as happy as a child with a new toy.

"Look what I got! It's cool, ain't it?" - exclaimed Trevor proud with a big grin.

"What's so special about that?" - asked Michael curiously.

"This scar, Mikey, is like a beautiful trophy of war! You'll never understand it because you've always been like a fragile princess that needs to be rescued from the knight in shining armor, who happens to be me!" – replied Trevor patting his chest, and knelt down in front of his blue-eyed friend.

Michael didn't try to hide a smile looking at his pal's silly attitude and said sarcastically in an exaggerated British accent: "I'm flattered by your tremendous brave deed of yesterday killing that black dragon, milord, but I'd feel honored if thou stopped admiring your *divine reward* and put on your *elegant robes*" – he said while pointing out at Trevor's shit-stained shirt and torn jeans that were placed on the bed - "In other words, move your ass and get ready! We're leaving this motherfucking town forever!".

"Your wish is my command, Your Majesty!" – exclaimed Trevor while performing a military salute.

After Trevor put on his clothes (this time without the help of Michael), they packed their things, paid the hospital bills, and bade an emotive farewell to Mrs. Rosaline, Trevor couldn't

resist the temptation to ask Michael a question on the way to the car:

"So...Mikey, ain't you gonna tell me what happened after I got injured? I'm eager to know it."

"Huh? I thought I'd told you already. It didn't happen anything special, though. I just took you to the motel's room and made you some cures with stuff I bought at a pharmacy before moving you to the hospital. That's it." – said Michael with absolute conviction in his words. Fortunately for him, alongside his outstanding skills for shooting, he was always good at lying, and from an early age, he perfected his lying technique to the extent the nervousness of his voice and gestures were imperceptible, and still was able to deceive a smart person like Trevor.

"Mmm...so it was like that? ok, I believe you. I only hope you hadn't molested me while I was unconscious, eh, Mikey!" – said Trevor nudging Michael with his elbow.

"Trevor, please! Of course, I didn't do anything! Who do you think I am? I ain't a molester like you!".

"Haha! I know you're as *innocent* as a lamb, honeybun, and you wouldn't be able to do a thing even if you had the chance to be with me for a night..." – Trevor blushed a bit with the flash mental image of him and Michael sharing a night of passion – "A-Anyways, um, maybe this time we can go up to my beautiful Canada and do some tourism around the Lake Lucy to relax a bit. In winter, the scenery of the mountains covered in snow is stunning!".

"Sounds good, yeah, we'll see... But first, we should stop by a gas station to buy a map".

"And some food, I'm starving! Unless we could pick up some tasty hitchhikers to eat for breakfast, hehe..."

"Argh, you and your cannibalistic tendencies! Even after facing death, you'll never change, T" – chuckled Michael.

"Hahaha, I'm joking, M. Come on, let's get moved!"- Trevor got into the car and turned the

radio on.

"Ah, I'll have to make a call to Amanda later and inform her about what happened these days...I miss talking with her" – announced Michael, but Trevor pretended not to hear that last phrase, as he was busy singing aloud to his favorite song of Love Fist while looking through the window.

Michael gave a gaze to Trevor and thought to himself: "Mom, I hope I don't regret later what I've done to Trevor, but this was the right choice, isn't it? May the Lord forgive me one day for my lies...

And both left the hospital, road to a new destination yet to be decided, where surely more adventures would wait for Trevor and Michael.

Back at present-day in Sandy Shores, Trevor opened his eyes slowly and stayed in silence in front of the mirror, still gazing at his scar, but something in his expression had changed. After those lost memories that had remain slept for more than twenty years came to life inside Trevor's mind, he busted out crying hysterically, because he managed to remember as clear as water everything that happened on that cold night of 1990, and he couldn't feel more miserable about that. The scenes of him hugging and kissing Michael, as well as the moment he wrote the love letter while he was bleeding out in the motel's room were playing like a movie inside his head. Furthermore, if he concentrated enough, he could reminisce lively about the burning in his throat, the piercing pain in his stomach, the warm blood and tears falling to the paper, and reproduce with precision each word he wrote by hand to Michael. But what made him more depressed and angrier was the fact that his *best friend* had lied to him for all these years, assuring that *nothing* happened between them.

"THAT FAT SNAKE! So that was another fucking secret he had been keeping to himself all these years, apart from faking his own death! I hate him with all my life! I hate him, I HATE HIM, I FUCKING HATE HIM!! I swear to God that if I had him in front of me right now, I'll...! AAARG!" — Trevor growled while hitting his head, kicking, and punching several times with violence against the wall of his bathroom. It wasn't until the moment he saw

a thread of blood starting to come out from his forehead and his knuckles got bruised that he threw himself onto the floor, bawling his eyes out.

Some hours later, Ron entered the trailer to check if something happened to his boss, the CEO of Trevor Philips Industries, Enterprises or whatever its name is, given that he always started his mourning routine screaming to the top of his lungs asking him to bring his coffee or otherwise "he'd cut his arm off", but, instead, he found Trevor curled up on the floor and sniveling.

"Boss! For Gods' sake, what happened? Y-your head is bleeding!" – said Ron extremely panicked, doing justice to his nickname "Nervous Ron".

"Ron...? I... Michael...lied...love..." – Trevor couldn't articulate coherent words because of all the sobs and snot that were blocking up his throat.

"That lizard again? Why that even surprises me... - Ron sighed, being impotent to help Trevor to relieve his pain. "Boss, come here, let's go to my house. First, I'll give you some *glass* to help you calm down and I'll prepare your favorite coffee with whipped cream and chocolate chips. We'll talk later about that asshole of Michael, alright?" – He said with a sweet tone while softly patting Trevor's back, doing his best to console him.

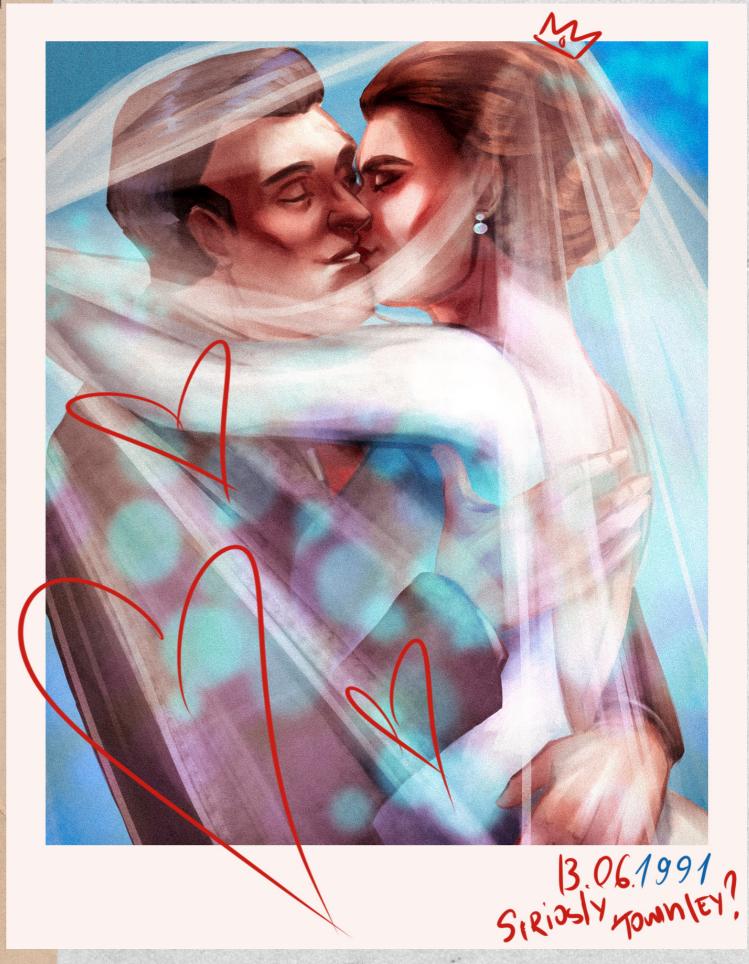
Trevor just nodded his head in agreement and followed Ron to his trailer, not before giving a last glance to his blemish, a scar forged with (unrequited) love, fears, and lies.



ONCE YOU SHOWED HE LIGHTS ABOVE NOW THEM ARE GONE WHAT DID YOU DO TO THE BOY I USED TO KNOW?

HE'S WITH THE LIGHTS YOU SAID AND WILLED ONE HORE



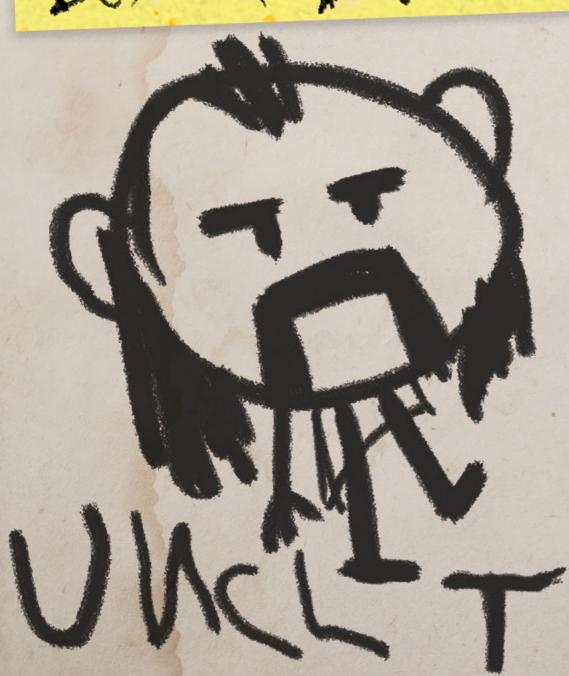


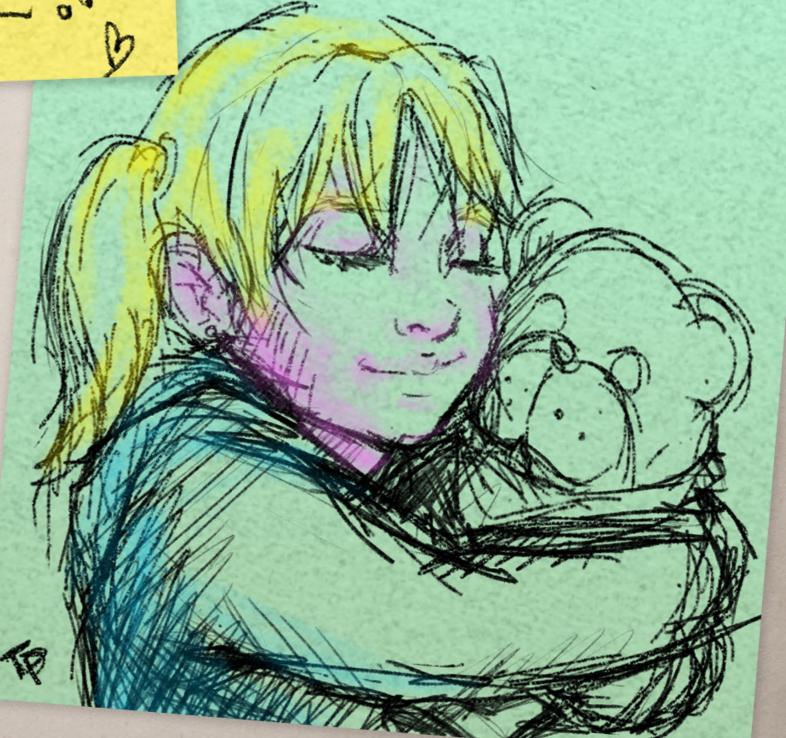


There she sat clapping
Restless stripes of shilight
And tore them out the carpet
Carried them back to me
Endnanted made my storm
Yearn history



THE VOS O





"I Want Your Midnights"

Tanner C.

1991

The clock at his bedside flipped from 2:59 to 3:00am.

Michael heaved a heavy sigh and threw back the covers. He scratched at the outside of his boxers as he padded down the steps.

He had been stuck in this house with Lester, Moses, and Trevor for the 4 days. They had been coming back from a job three states over when Trevor decided to stick up a gas station while Michael was filling up the tank. Lester demanded that they find a safe house and lay low until they were sure they hadn't been identified.

The first night had gone smooth enough, playing cards and drinking. But tensions were high enough between him and Trevor without being forced to live on top of each other. As they got closer to the wedding, Trevor had become more and more withdrawn.

Michael was headed for the fridge when the glow of the television caught his eye. Curious, he changed course. Trevor was on the couch, watching Rum Runner. Michael leaned against the door frame, taking in his partner's profile. He longed for the days when it was just the two of them against the world.

He pushed off the wall and walked about the side of the couch, ignoring the pang in his chest when Trevor tensed at the sound of his voice.

"Scoot over."

Trevor slumped down and straightened his legs, not looking away from the tv.

"Come on, man," Michael sighed. He reached to move Trevor's legs and took a kick straight to the stomach. Trevor still didn't turn his head, but the corners of his mouth turned up in a satisfied smirk.

"Jesus, T!" Michael yelped, clutching the spot that would definitely bruise later. "Fine. Fucking fine! You wanna be an asshole? Fine. I'm going back to bed."

Michael stormed back towards the kitchen, but caught himself in the door frame. He took a few deep breaths, counted down from ten, tried to recall happy memories, and all the other shit Amanda was always trying to get him to do to manage his temper.

10...9...8...

They had stolen this Imponte Ruiner from the motel parking lot, and were flying down

the highway with the windows down. Trevor had his feet on the dash, and was screaming along to every song on the radio. He leaned over and grabbed Michael's aviators off his head, throwing him a quick wink before he put them on. Michael turned up the radio and grinned at the road.

7...6...5...

The smoke from their shared cigarette mingled with the smoke from the grill. It had been raining for weeks and a cold breeze cut through Trevor's sweatshirt-well, Michael's sweatshirt, but at this point their clothes were so mixed together it didn't matter. He side stepped to avoid a drip coming in through the porch roof, conveniently causing his arm to brush Michael's. Amber eyes met blue and they exchanged easy smiles. The cigarette dangled from the corner of Michael's mouth as he flipped the burgers.

4...3...2...

Michael's back was pressed against the motel door. He tried to lean forward and catch Trevor's lips, but he was shoved back. Trevor held eye contact as he sank to his knees. Michael's heart pounded in his throat as Trevor undid his belt. He threaded his fingers through dark, greasy hair as he slid into Trevor's mouth.

1.

Finally, when his blood pressure lowered and his fists unclenched, Michael walked back to the couch, climbed over the back, and wedged himself in behind Trevor. He wrapped his arm around Trevor's stomach and stroked lightly with his thumb until his partner finally relaxed against him.

1995

Michael was supposed to leave first thing in the morning to meet Lester and Trevor. They had been setting up a job out of state, and were ready to move on the score. It was still dark when Michael finished packing. He took his bag out to the car and came back in to say goodbye to Amanda, but seeing how peaceful she looked, he couldn't make himself wake her. Jimmy had been sick for most of the week, and Amanda had barely slept until his fever broke last night.

Instead of hitting the road, Michael was struck with a rare burst of husbandly duty. He cleaned up the toys in the living room, and when the kids woke up, he made them pancakes and settled them in to watch the Sunday morning cartoons. By the time Amanda woke up, Michael was finishing washing the dishes from lunch.

Even though he only stopped for gas and a drive thru burger, Michael didn't make it to Lester's safe house until long after dark. He crept up the stairs quietly, and cracked the door to Trevor's room. Michael stood in the doorway, taking in the scene. His partner was sprawled out on the bed, naked, with a half empty bottle of whiskey still clutched in his

hand. There was a bag of tapes from the video rental store on top of the television. On the nightstand was a mirror, a baggie of coke, and an open bottle of lube. Clearly, Trevor had had plans for their evening.

Michael swallowed his guilt as he stripped down and crawled into bed with Trevor. He pulled a blanket over them, and tried to pull the whiskey bottle from his partner's grip. Trevor jolted awake at the contact.

"Nice of you to show up", said Trevor, sitting up in bed. He grabbed the bottle of whiskey back from Michael and took a swig. Michael didn't meet his eyes. Instead, he took the bottle from Trevor for a second time and took a long pull.

"Jimmy was sick."

"Yeah, sure. I see how that stopped you from calling."

"What the fuck do you want from me, T?" Michael snapped. "You want me to run off and leave my family? Bail on my kids, just like my fucking dad? Like your fucking dad?"

He took another long drink. Trevor was silent for a long minute. Michael braced for an outburst, but it never came. Instead, Trevor settled back into bed and rolled away from Michael. Michael finished the bottle, staring at Trevor's back. He knew he went too far.

Michael curled his body around Trevor's and placed a soft kiss at the back of his neck, whispering apologies in his ear.

"I'm sorry."

He kissed his shoulder.

"I'm sorry."

His hand slid up Trevor's thigh.

"I'm so."

He nipped at Trevors earlobe.

"Fucking."

He cared his fingers through the hair at Trevor's navel.

"Sorry."

Trevor grabbed his wrist and rolled over, pining Michael to the mattress. He straddled him and leaned in close to his partner's ear.

"Prove it."

1999

After being gone for months, Michael came home for the holidays with his cut of their last take burning a hole in his pocket. Michael, Trevor, and Lester had been working with a crew down south, infiltrating an armored car company. It was their best paying job to date, but it wasn't without its share of trouble. Their cover was blown when one of the

southerners was arrested on a DUI, and he flipped on the rest of the crew to save himself. Their safe house was raided and Michael had been nicked by a stray bullet during the shootout.

Michael had barely been home a day before Amanda told him he needed to stop being on the road as much. After a night of screaming, crying, drinking, and Michael sleeping on the couch, he agreed to make some changes. The day after Christmas, they met in Lester's living room.

"Thanks for doing this, man," said Michael, making himself at home on the couch. "I know you don't like us all being together when there's still this much heat." Trevor eyes him warily. He hadn't spoken since Michael arrived, but he hadn't taken his eyes off him either. Lester grumbles and let's him continue.

"Mandys really putting her foot down. She needs me home more, so I was thinking-"

Before he could finish, Trevor was on his feet.

"I fucking knew it," Trevor shouted. "I knew it was only a matter of time before you bailed."

Michael stood, too. He reached for Trevor, but his hand was slapped away as he continued.

"So you're going to go back to your happy little family and where does that leave us? Huh? Because of one little wound? Do you ever think about anyone but yourself?"

They're toe to toe. Michael firmly takes Trevor's face in his hands, holding his gaze.

"Calm the fuck down! I'm not going anywhere! Will you let me talk?"

They hold each other's gaze. Trevor stays silent, but Michael can feel the tightness in his jaw. With the hand Lester can't see, Michael rubs his thumb along Trevor's cheek bone. Michael tries again, softer.

"I swear. I'm not going anywhere. Please just listen."

Trevor still doesn't blink, but Michael feels some of the tension leave his body. Finally, he nods.

"Fine. Talk, Townley."

They sit, both on the couch this time. Michael turns his attention back to Lester, doing his best to ignore the knowing look in his eye.

"You know when T and I met, we were running stuff over the border. Mostly drugs. Sometimes other, uh, special interest items. I handled the cargo, Trevor handled transport."

Michael placed a firm hand on Trevor's knee while he talked.

"These last few jobs have brought a lot of heat, so I was thinking maybe we lay low a little longer. We could see about getting our freight operation back up and running. What do you think, Lest?"

Lester considers him for a moment, then looks to Trevor, who's staring at the hand still on his leg.

"I'll have to look into logistics, but it's not a bad idea," says Lester after a minute. "Some steady income would allow us to be pickier about jobs. Give me a few days to feel out the market. I need to make some calls."

With that, Lester rises and heads down the hall to his room. Michael grins at Trevor and squeezes his leg.

"You ready to fly again? Just like the old days?"

"Just like the old days..." Trevor echos, nodding slowly. He scans Michaels face for any sign or deception or an ulterior motive. Instead, all he finds is a genuine smile. When he leans in, Michael meets him halfway, catching his lips in a soft kiss. The hand slides farther up his leg.

When Michael wakes, it's still dark, but there's a deep blue cast coming in through the blinds. He tries to move but finds himself locked in place by one strong arm over his waist and the other coming around his neck to grip his shoulder. Every inch of Trevor is pressed against his back.

Michael presses soft kisses up the arm in front of him.

"Hey," he whispers.

His only answer is Trevor's breath on the back of his neck. He manages to wiggle around to face his partner in crime. He strokes a thumb across Trevor's lips.

Watching the other sleep sounded like a Trevor activity, but Michael often finds himself lying awake watching Trevor.

He should get back. Even if he leaves now, Amanda and the kids will be up when he gets home. Michael loves his family. If you had asked Michael in high school what he was his life being like at 30, they're exactly what he would have described. He wouldn't have seen himself giving up his pro ball dreams for a career as a bank robber. And 18 year old Mi-

chael certainly wouldn't have been able to dream up Trevor. But his family is the one part of the American dream that he got right.

And yet, as much as he loves them, he also loves the other half of his life. The freedom and the power. And though he'd never say it out loud, he loves waking up in Trevor's arms.

So Michael would make it work. He was not a man who took no for an answer, and he wanted both. So he would have both.

He pressed a chaste kiss to Trevor's lips.

"I gotta go, baby."

"Don't."

"I have to. The kids'll be up soon. Why don't you come with me? See the kids. You know they miss their uncle T."

Trevor heaved a sigh and finally opened his eyes. He stroked Michael's hair and nodded slowly, considering his offer.

"We gotta find a mall on the way. I owe them presents," said Trevor as he climbed over Michael. "I'm not getting Mandy shit, though."

"Deal," Michael laughs, smacking Trevor's ass as he goes to pack.

2003

The yellow light from the Waffle House sign across the parking lot cast a sickly glow across the motel bed. Michael watched Trevor's back rise and fall. He took a long drag from his cigarette and wondered how they had gotten to this point. Sneaking around was starting to take a toll on his relationship with his family, but he couldn't stay away from Trevor.

It had been over a year since Amanda had banned him from the house and insisted Michael cut down on the time he'd been spending on the road. Still, Michael found the time to slip away. As far as Amanda was concerned, he was at the corner bar with a few of the other dads from the neighborhood. She didn't need to know that, after the first round of drinks, he slipped out and drove across three counties to Trevor's door.

It had been quick, rough, and dirty. Trevor had been so high that Micheal couldn't bear to look at him. He just bent him over the mattress and tried to pretend their relationship wasn't disintegrating before his eyes. Michael always felt a little shame after fucking Trevor, but this was beyond his normal catholic guilt. In the dingy, yellow light, Trevor

looked sickly. His lifestyle was taking a toll on him, and Michael could barely find the remnants of his friend under the sores and track marks.

Michael slipped on his jeans and lit a cigarette as he headed out to the parking lot. He felt out of place, like he was in a dream. The neon motel sign and rusting cars in the parking lot reminded him of all the nights they had spent tangled together in places just like this one. But now the good memories were tainted by worse ones. For every clandestine meeting was a night Michael had sat by Trevor's side, making sure that he didn't choke on his own vomit, or helped him hide the body of someone who looked at him the wrong way.

Michael reached the payphone at the edge of the parking lot and dialed the number off the card that had been burning a hole in his pocket for months.

27...

Trevor tossing him a beer as he counts out the take from their last job.

35...

Trevor and Amanda firing insults at each other over an uncomfortable Christmas dinner.

55...

Trevor's smile whenever he was behind the controls of a plane.

01...

Trevor overdosing in a dark alley while Michael screamed for help.

32...

Trevor holding Tracey for the first time.

Michael panicked and went to slam the receiver down. Before he could hang up, a tired voice answered.

"Do you know what time it is?"

"Agent Norton? Uh...It's Michael Townley."

Drop the Game trepidatingboarfetus

I've been seeing all, I've been seeing your soul Give me things that I wanted to know Tell me things that you've done I've been feeling old, I've been feeling cold You're the heat that I know See, you are my sun Hush, I said there's more to life than rush Not gonna leave this place with us Drop the game, it's not enough

Dave Norton was a decidedly sneaky and odd son-of-a-bitch even if he was a very quiet one. Michael felt itchy and uncomfortable whenever they were in the same room together even though lately, the more they met, those notions *were* starting to fade away, but the ideas this guy was now slipping into his head through his silky honeyed voice grated on his nerves and made him want to vomit every horrid emotion out of his body onto the cheap stucco flooring of the Mexican restaurant where they were currently nursing beers that had long-since gone lukewarm and gnawing on chips with salsa made by the hands of some factory worker that was most definitely *not* even remotely Latino.

"He's a loose cannon with no one who cares for him, Michael," Norton offered softly while twisting the glass handle for the beer in his hand, watching the amber liquid inside of it carefully, just as carefully as he inspected everything else with his snoopy eyes. "He's got a file that fills several rooms already, all on his own because he's been burning bridges since before you knew him."

Michael stared indifferently at the bottle in front of him. "He has a mother, a goddamn brother."

Norton peered at him curiously and almost twitched his lips into a smile until the displeased look on the man's face made him think better of it, so he sighed. "Even Charles Manson had a mother who loved him. So did Ted Bundy."

"Jesus fucking Christ, that's where we are with this?" He finished the rest of the beer, swilling it in his mouth to rinse the taste of despair and hatred for himself away, but no matter what he did, the painful sickness in the deepest part of his belly lay dormant like a growing beast of which he couldn't rid himself even when he swallowed. He wiped his mouth with the back of his flannel coat and glared at Norton with contempt. "I'm not going to be a part of this shit. You can do whatever the fuck you want. Arrest me, I...I don't...I really don't give a fucking shit, you know?"

But he didn't mean it, and he hated himself for that too. He was scared shitless even thin-

king it because his mind spiraled around Amanda and the kids back at the house, and goddamn, how had Trevor seen his downfall into a fucking coward before he ever had?

An unsteady hand reached out to grab his arm, slithered onto his skin, not unlike a snake, and the honey voice poured into his ears again with sweet words. "You know how it is, Michael. He's a mad dog. He *has* to be put down. You know as well as I do that he's got his fingers in many pies these past months." Stone cold eyes drooped upwards and stared him straight in the face. "You said so yourself. He's been pushing you out, bringing Snider in more for these newer jobs." Cold fingers stroked unpleasantly at his wrist, and Norton's lips curled into a knowing grin. "Do you know what kind of jobs he's been doing? Or are you too preoccupied to ask when you're around him?"

"You shut the fuck up," Michael hissed irritably but couldn't find it in himself to yank his wrist back. It felt unreal, like that time his dad had caught him and his long-time buddy Howie fooling around in his room when they had thought no one was home. Howie had been kicked off the freshman football team in town, and they had never spoken again after that.

He had been so pissed off at his fucking dad, but he hadn't had the guts to stand up to him because he was The Authority. Don't go against the grain. That's all he'd ever been taught, for fuck's sake. Obey the parents and follow God. Listen to the coach. Don't break the rules unless Coach or Dad says so then go to confession. Say the rosary. Pray for forgiveness.

Only like girls. Don't like boys too.

And Dave Norton was The Authority. Or part of it, at least, and by extension, a part of this group of people who'd approached him with the idea of making his life better by having him set up the only people in his life besides his wife and kids he'd ever fully cared about.

OK, so maybe he didn't give two shits about Brad Snider.

They wanted Lester Crest, and well, Lester was just too intelligent and way more slippery than the slimiest lizard at the FIB. That was already asking for too much trouble, he knew. Lester would figure things out quickly.

But Trevor Philips?

"It's you who cares," Norton quipped, obviously amused. "You're the only one who cares."

His grip on the bottle tightened, and the glass whined, aching at him to just go ahead and break it already. Unleash some anger on *something*. But he shook his head and blew out a calming breath. He wasn't Trevor, couldn't do the "living in the moment" or "feed your emotions" bullshit anymore. No, he was getting busy with eating them, instead. "I'm not the only fucking person who cares, so I wish you'd stop saying that," he ground out.

Norton leaned back against the booth seat and shrugged. "Almost all of the pieces are together. We're getting our end ready, so you'd better not get cold feet. This isn't your wedding."

Michael shot him a miserable wilting look. "Hey, I didn't get cold feet there, you asshole."

Norton smiled, tapping his knee. "No, indeed. You just took a different approach. Better not do that with us, Michael."

He frowned, the threat duly noted.

The hand that had been tapping the knee patted him on his knee, and it made him feel slightly clammy suddenly instead of being the reassurance he supposed it was meant to bring. Norton's eyes twinkled brightly, looking awkward and almost downright ghoulish but not quite at the same time in the atmosphere of the restaurant with its gaily strung outdoor-style fairy lights.

Really, it was just out of place with timing and subject matter. He wanted to think that had they met given any other circumstances, Dave Norton would've been a decent man.

Quirky, but decent...maybe? He wasn't sure, choosing to shiver instead.

"Look, Michael," Norton coaxed soothingly like some great earworm that had begun to burrow itself into him, and he felt himself swaying to the words a bit, "it's late, and your family is probably wondering where you are. We'll talk more before it's showtime, so get some rest." A stray hand gripped his shoulder, massaging the tender flesh there underneath layers of outerwear, and no matter how much he tried to move away, he couldn't. "Before you know it, all of this snow will be a thing of the past, and you'll be in sunshine all of the time."

He practically ran out of the building.

There was no need for sunshine, was there? He had sun and heat in the midst of the snow and cold. There was Trevor. That was the source he'd always flocked to during the deepest, darkest parts of winter where no one else dared to tread.

And he called out to Michael like a warming beacon in the chill of the night, his body moving towards his hideout without even having to think about the steps it was taking; just knowing it wasn't moving towards home with the wife and kids, and that would be yet another fight, but he just *had* to see him.

He knew Brad wasn't a good influence. Jesus, *none* of them were good, but he had always likened himself, Trevor, and Lester to a sort of modern day Robin Hoods. Banks were insured. People got their money back. The whole system was a fucking joke anyway, of that,

Trevor was right. And they were always working themselves toward something bigger and better -- knocking at the US government's back door. Readying themselves to rob from the biggest thief in the land.

Of course, thanks to Lester, they were a revolving door of pieces to a big puzzle for whatever the jobs needed, but the constants had remained Lester, Trevor, himself, and Brad. Moses had even pulled out after having a come-to-Jesus moment of sorts after a job-go-ne-wrong caused by Brad's own carelessness, and the latter had never once offered an ounce of apology or a hint of regret. It had just been "that's the nature of the game," and of course, Trevor had grunted his agreement, so Michael hadn't pushed the matter further.

Of course, he'd bitched to Norton. How chummy those two had gotten had been one of his first concerns along with the rampant drug use around the kids. The minute Amanda had told Trevor to knock it off, he had turned on her like a dog snapping on its master--

No, no...no, he didn't want to go there with the same terms Norton had used, but Trevor just wasn't himself anymore. And his hatred and depression seemed especially fixated on Amanda to the point in which she no longer allowed him at the house.

Maybe the final straw that had made him even entertain these discreet evening chats with Norton which made him feel scummy like a cheating lover -- and oh ho ho, the irony in that wasn't lost on him, thank fuck -- was the saddening realization and painful hit to his heart that his *own children* were too worried to have their formerly precious Uncle T around. They wanted him to get help.

There was no getting help for Trevor though was what no one understood.

He'd always been a ticking time bomb, a beautiful bright sun on the verge of going supernova. Stupidly, maybe innocently, he'd thought he could harvest that raw energy and help Trevor use it for something good, but there were just too many variables in life.

Brad Snider was such a fucking variable.

No, he wasn't stupid. He *knew* things, heard rumors, tried to ignore because he didn't want to think things about the person he *thought* he knew, loved with all of his heart. Brad loved drugs too, wanted to expand out, but he wasn't just into selling to turnt-out old junkies and calling it a day, *no*; he sold to teens. He was dangerously close to selling to Michael's *own kids*, which was probably an effort to push his fucking buttons, and he had succeeded.

And the fat fuck had just yucked it up in that annoying squeal of his, saying they'd learn sooner or later because everyone does, and they'd already come from addict parents. He'd been so close to slitting that fuckwad's throat but had stopped and could only blame his upbringing and the whole misbegotten code of "honor amongst thieves" that kept him

from doing it.

Or maybe it was because Trevor had been passed out in a corner on a stained mattress, naked and tangled between the sheets, looking thinner than he could ever remember, and he'd wondered briefly if Trevor would be mad at him for killing Brad. It was something he hadn't wanted to chance.

But he had left Brad with a nasty shiner that day that he still hadn't explained to Trevor, and thankfully, neither had Brad. It had come after he had stared at Trevor's prone form for way too long, remembering how beautiful he had been when they'd first met despite the leftover scars he'd acquired from a youth filled with abuse, and the scars were still there now but ached brighter on his paler emaciated body.

It had filled him with sadness, but there was no denying that Trevor would never *not* be beautiful.

And then Brad had saddled up beside him, touching him like they were old buddies sharing a sick secret, and whispered cockily in his ear, "His ass looks all nice and fucked there, doesn't it? Too bad he only calls out for you."

That's when Michael had seen red. And hadn't been back.

Until now.

He stood outside the battered building that had served as the hideout and base of operations for whatever the fuck Brad and Trevor were getting up to. A quick look around didn't turn up Brad's clunker of a fucking Ford which was a blessing, but he gnawed his lower lips with worry, wondering if maybe Trevor was gone too, and this was a mistake.

But it didn't feel like one. A small lamp was on inside, and the unmistakable stink of Trevor was all over the place. He just knew he was here, somehow. Playing Trevor had come as easy to him as playing football, and something screamed out at him that maybe, just *maybe*, that wasn't right, but it just simply *was*.

Knocking produced no response, but Trevor was never one for answering the goddamn thing these days, in any case, so he tested the door and found it unlocked. He snorted dismissively and rolled his eyes; Brad *would* be a stupid fucking asshole just like that, leaving things wide open. The same stupid asshole had always poked fun at Lester's complete obsessiveness -- and yes, *perhaps* borderline paranoia -- about security measures and safeguards, calling him anal about such shit. He'd insisted that "staying in plain sight was sometimes the best safety" which sounded like it came from some bad Stallone film, he swore to God, but he always managed to keep his opinions to himself.

Brad was going to get Trevor killed--

And then he remembered and pursed his lips, bile and stomach acid creeping up his throat along with bits of chips and crappy salsa and skunky cheap beer, and he barely bent over in time to puke them onto the concrete beneath his feet.

He spat the remainder out and wiped his mouth sullenly, then threw the door open before calling out, "Trevor?"

There was just a need to hear his voice, his mind told him. He needed to think about what he was doing, to think about how final this was. There was no taking this back. Norton had told him as much. He couldn't fuck around with this. His family was at stake. He was at stake.

"Mikey?" a voice called out weakly from the room where the light was fizzling out, occasionally blinking off and then back to life with a strange crackling sound.

He was at stake. His sun was winking out.

His feet shambled towards the source as they always had since that very day long ago when that same heat had sent a solitary flare ripping through time to save his life. Had he ever remembered to thank him for that? Had he always been so selfish in all of their actions together or had there just never been time for it? There was another job to fulfill, another place to be, a party to fuck around at, snort this, drink that, smoke up, pop one, and it had become an endless rush.

He was getting too old for it all. Trevor was getting too old for it all, but he was too stubborn to see it for what it was.

Gilded Apollo was laying on the same stained mattress as if he'd never left, draped in sheets and covers with spots of undeterminable origin, and he could only hope that they were food or at the very least, were Trevor's own bodily fluids, but it was hard telling where the damn covers had even made their way from, or if they'd just been in the sad-sack building when it had been put back into use. Trevor was a "waste not, want not" kind of guy. Unfortunately, sometimes.

He moved towards him and basked in his glow, could feel the warmth radiating from him even though he stood a full five feet from the bed. "I'm here, T."

The fallen sun god drew himself under the mass of clouds surrounding him on the makeshift bed. "Why the fuck are you even here," he mumbled from underneath. "The warden will have your dick if you aren't back in your cell soon."

He tried to keep his temper in check, the need to keep stringing Trevor along be damned. They were too old for this shit, really too old to act like fucking stupid ass kids. He could smell this for what it was: typical hurt Trevor lashing out.

Well, fuck. He supposed he had a right to be hurt. They hadn't really spoken in about five weeks. He hadn't been by here since the night of the coldcocking to Brad's sneering face which had been about three weeks prior.

When had things gotten this bad?

He settled for a small laugh. "Hey, she doesn't always have me by the balls. I just came to check up on you because I...I'm worried, OK?" He inched towards him, preparing himself for prostration if need be. "Can't I miss you?"

He didn't mean it to come out as a whisper, but his vocal cords just wouldn't comply no matter how much he tried. Everything else came out like half-hearted moans and grunts as if he'd temporarily gained muteness over a set of words.

But the room stayed overcast. Even the shitty lamp hadn't popped back to life, as if it shared a hivemind with its gloomy master. "You tell me. You've told me I can't miss something I don't even have." An amber eye peeked out from behind the stained mass of clouds and glared at him condemnatorily. "So tell me, Michael, how does it feel?"

Fuck, he *wanted*, no, *really needed*, to be angry right now, but for whatever, well, he really didn't know. How could he be mad at the truth? He could recall saying real shitty masterpieces as such when he was drunk and depressed. Hell, he did it to Amanda all of the goddamn time.

And then he laughed.

Trevor's head poked out of the covers curiously. "What the fuck is so funny?"

Deciding he no longer gave a fuck about whatever Petri dish assortment of bacteria was on the mattress -- because it hadn't killed Trevor yet, *right*? -- he plopped down and moved towards Trevor with an understanding gleam in his eye. "You think Amanda is set on some fucking pedestal high above you as if I treat you two any differently. She and I fight. You and I fight. Trevor, I'm just always going to be a cold insufferable bastard to be around. I was raised as a *Catholic*, for fuck's sake. All we *know* is suffering and penance." His hands removed the filth and cloudy covers from his golden sun god, and he hugged him to him gently, careful with his fragility. "I'm cold, Trevor, and I need you to warm me up, please." His lips rushed in to melt into the molten gold that was Trevor's. "Please, I need you. I need you to show me that you're still there inside, Trevor." He peppered him with kisses, stroking a fine fire that elicited a roar from the golden god before him, and he was both excited and fearful.

Would he get the golden boy of his youth who'd run and laughed and played alongside him? Dreamed big fantastical dreams that were the dreams of harebrained youth who'd known no better?

Or would he get the fiery new god who'd raised like a dark phoenix out of the ashes; scary, beautiful, and untamed? Ready to take over and lay waste to all in his path?

Two confused honey-colored eyes stared into his, and Michael was taken back to that day all of those years ago when they'd met over flare guns, unplanned extras, and dust trails. "Mikey? I...I don't understand. The...the stuff...Brad said we gotta test the stuff...I'm still here." A fine dusting of red colored his cheeks, and he cleared his throat. "I didn't mean anything by it, OK? Just forget what I said."

Michael laid him back against the mattress, preparing to worship him. It had been so long, and even though everything inside of his head that was Catholic, his parents, his upbringing, and hell, even the FIB very much revolted and screamed at what he was about to do, the parts of him that were all *truly* Michael Townley hummed like a finely-tuned piano that had yearned to play this song again, and they thanked him. He needed this, he needed to warm up in the godforsaken cold that was North Yankton, and the only way to do it was the eternal sunshine that had been at his side, and he had to do it before that star would wink out because he knew it was coming.

Beautiful stars weren't meant long for this universe.

He looked in Trevor's slowly fading eyes and loved him, cared for him, breathed life into him the only way he knew how.

"Warm me up, Trevor. I'm so cold."

And Trevor, to his credit, looked at him warily but slowly raised an arm and invited him under the blankets. "It was you who gave Brad that black eye, wasn't it." It wasn't even a question. He just knew.

Michael didn't even hesitate. "He deserved it. I'd do it again." He trailed kisses down Trevor's stomach and twirled his tongue around his belly button, enjoyed listening to him groan with wanton rage and innocent desire, still unsure which side he'd wind up with in the end. He could understand why Trevor gained satisfaction in playing with fire, but he, himself, could only get as close as this to doing the actual practice. "He doesn't get to fuck around with what's mine."

Trevor perked up, raised up on his elbows. "How's that now? Yours? I haven't been yours in how long?" His eyes narrowed, and he tried to shrink away from Michael, but Michael held fast. "This is more of your head game bullshit, I swear to--"

He looked Trevor in the eyes and saw every bit of the scared young manchild with no direction he'd still been when they'd met, locked gazes with the same loyal lover whose passion was like trying to love a raging fire and was often the very thing he needed to melt away the ice from around his soul, shared memories with the man who'd become his best friend, brother, and partner in more ways than one.

And exchanged parting glances with the person who'd grown closer to Brad Snider because he'd felt forsaken by his friend, the person he loved, all because that person didn't know how to tell the truth to people or to *his own damn self*.

Trevor was many things, and he *was* capable of some pretty shitty things, but he *knew* Trevor. There was a reason to his madness. He did have some rules that he operated within which is how they had managed to work together for so long.

But he couldn't make anyone else understand Trevor because the man *just didn't care* to be understood by anyone other than his mother and Michael Townley.

"You've always been mine, baby," Michael said firmly as he softly took Trevor's weeping cock into his hands. "And to tell you the truth, the *real* truth, you can miss something you don't have. I miss you so much every day."

_***********

He almost let it slip that he'd miss him always. Jesus Christ, how was he supposed to go through with the fucking plan now that he knew that it was just Trevor being Trevor, following along without much direction? Doing shit because he missed *him*? God, he hated himself so fucking much. Was it possible for a person to hate themselves this much? If it was, it existed within a man named Michael Townley's soul. And God had to hate him twice over.

Norton had called him again to remind him that there was no backing out, and he'd told him again that he wasn't getting cold feet, that this wasn't his fucking wedding -- that had thrown Amanda for a loop because she'd been in the goddamn room when that conversation had transpired, and he was still scratching his head over how to explain the meaning behind *that* certain turn of the phrase -- and had assured him that soon they'd all be traipsing about sunny Los Santos without another thought about North Yankton, snow, the old times, or Trevor Philips ever again.

Well, probably most of them.

Mandy had noticed he was drinking more and more as the weeks went by, and she had asked him, point-blank, if he was having second thoughts. She'd always been good at reading his body language. Or half the male populations, for that matter. He tried not to hold it against her since he had his little secrets too, but Trevor had helped him to realize that his problem with everything was that he liked being the one in control of what was going on and who was being fucked. He didn't like it when someone else took that from him. "A typical repressed Catholic," Trevor had so lovingly called him once.

Trevor....

He found himself in front of his door, or what consisted of a door for their rundown shack, again, and he knew it wasn't right. It was like trying to make up time with a beloved ailing pet before putting it down. Even Trevor knew something was up because he was just that observant, but he was so starved for affection that he ignored his gut feelings just to feel something close to old times.

God, Michael felt so *fucking shitty*.

Trevor's head currently rested in Michael's lap, who sat smoothing the coarser strands of hair while also contemplating about what to do with the FIB mess and Trevor. He was at a loss of what to do.

He regarded the sleeping man in his lap. At rest, Trevor looked so much more youthful and at peace than his years gave off. He knew that if he gave at least half a rat's ass at trying to maintain his mustache and run a comb through his waning hair, he'd look better, but it had been a battle they'd fought over the years.

He was struck with a strong desire to protect him, but it wasn't the same as with Amanda. He knew Trevor could fight for himself, but there was something buried deep within him, like a lost little child, that cried out sometimes. They cried out to each other, only understood each other.

And it was that which kept him and Trevor circling around each other like broken satellites in the night.

A crusty amber eye slowly opened and darted around, taking in its surroundings before settling on Michael. The mouth that accompanied it yawned not so gracefully. "I was pretty fucking sure you were gone."

"And why would that be?" Michael countered with a hint of amusement in his voice.

Trevor stretched in such a feline way, it made Michael grin and reach out to stroke his belly, but his hand was batted away. The man stuck his tongue out and shrugged. "Because you always leave at the first sign of intimacy. Ask Amanda."

And what *could* have been a pleasant morning screwed his face up into a look of wretchedness as if Michael had swallowed some of that fucking gasoline Trevor was always sniffing when he thought no one was looking. "Fucking *Christ*, Trevor, why the fuck would you want to bring *her* name up, for God's sake? And there are *no* intimacy problems with Amanda, you asshole."

"Not talking about sex, killer. Is that all you men think about?"

Michael hung his head while Trevor guffawed like a hyena on cocaine. He was supposed to spend his last remaining week preparing for Ludendorff with Brad and this fucknut. Lester had already done what he was going to do, but he'd bowed out without really speci-

fying why. The looks he'd shot Michael had given him all he'd needed to know though. Jesus, as if he hadn't felt bad enough. He'd always genuinely considered Lester a friend.

Who was *really* the bad guy here? He'd wondered that more than once. Probably wouldn't be the last time either. He was already having problems sleeping. He'd begun to have nightmares a few weeks back but was trying to keep those under wraps. The last thing he needed was anyone getting tipped off as to what was actually going on.

The changes in Trevor had happened over the past two weeks, ever since he'd come to stay. He'd started out a shell of his former existence, fucked up on whatever Brad was feeding and injecting into him, and yeah, Brad was probably making him feel great and masking the pain, but he wasn't loving him, so Michael had taken on that daunting task, trying to nourish him with actual food, kindness, and real love...and Trevor had begun to take root and sprout back like a flower, growing on the thaw produced from what had leaked out from Michael's cold heart. His roots had lapped it up like he'd been thirsting for that affection his whole life.

And he probably had.

Then mistakes were made. Michael had fallen in love with him all over again. And was very close to calling the whole thing off, even if it meant his life.

But then Brad had started pumping Trevor full of shit again, and Trevor ate it up like a kid in a candy store, claiming he needed the rush to do this job. He'd need to be prepared. And Michael reminded him they'd never needed it back in the old days, back before Brad, and for a minute, he'd seen a glimpse of that fiery red phoenix in Trevor's eyes as they'd glistened with burning rage while he'd insisted that he needed it, *thank you very much*, *you are not his goddamn father*, *Mikey*.

He couldn't save Trevor, and it was eating at him inside. He couldn't do it, he couldn't kill someone who was just messed up inside. They weren't so different. Flip a coin, and he'd be the one they'd want dead.

He couldn't kill someone he...loved. The boy who'd saved his miserable life that wasn't worth saving. He loved him more than he loved himself.

~********

Trevor paced back and forth not unlike an angry beast for the sixth time that day. Michael had lost count of how many times Trevor'd taken a hit of the pipe, but he'd smelled the tell-tell sign of the plasticiness between him and Brad multiple times, of that he was sure. His nose wrinkled in distaste.

"Trevor."

The pacing stopped. "What."

A crazy idea hit him earlier while he'd been dreaming about Trevor's death for probably the hundredth time that week. The notion was foolish, especially in the presence of fools who didn't suffer the concept of romance, but he tried anyway. Thank fuck Brad was outside. "What if...what if we just left?"

His long-time friend looked at him curiously and started to laugh but then thought better of it. "Is this a joke, Mikey?"

"No, it's not," he sighed. Fuck, why the hell had he even bothered? But he was knee-deep in shit anyway, so may as well trudge further into it. "I'm saying, uh, what if you and I just left? Like what if we just up and left and went somewhere else? Start over?"

"With no Amanda?"

Why the fuck was he so angry about the idea of no Amanda? "Of course not. Why the hell would I bring her along?"

"What about the kids??" He wanted to feel better about Trevor's answer because even though his ties towards Amanda only extended as far as "mother of precious Townley children" where she was concerned, Michael was still stuck with this pit in his stomach that was definitely several bleeding ulcers by now. "Besides Michael, what the fuck has gotten into you? This is getting us closer to the Big One, to our dreams, man. Isn't this what it's all about? Think about all of this money, Mikey. What you can do for the kids."

His blue eyes cast to the ground in shame. Even still, Trevor was thinking about him. "I...I don't think I can do this shit anymore, Trev. I'm getting too old." His weary gaze fell back up on Trevor's burning one. "It's too much, too fast. It's not fun like it was when we were young."

A wild mishmash of emotion fell over Trevor's face, and it was hard to get a read on any of it, but at the end of it all was a very damning cruelty which reminded him of his own father, and maybe it was reminiscent of the forever-gone Mr. Philips that had abandoned Trevor in his childhood. "What the fuck, Michael! It's a fucking job, it's not meant to be all fun and fucking games! The small-time shit we did when we were kids was two fucks with snot on their noses who could barely hold up a kid for lunch money, much less do some of the shit we've pulled off in recent years. You're always bitching about growing up, and well, dumbass, this is the big time! We've grown up! You can't back out now!!"

As he watched Trevor huff and puff, blowing spittle onto the floor, he was humbled by the realization that he was right, of course. He couldn't back out.

His family was counting on him.

Dave Norton and the FIB were counting on him.

Trevor was counting on him.

He had managed to fuck up Trevor over the years with his own failed repressions and shortcomings, mismanaging his feelings and not understanding others. Not long ago, he'd told Trevor that he needed to grow up, and now here he was getting it thrown back in his face, well-deserved.

Didn't Trevor deserve a new start too? Away from everyone who was using and abusing him?

God, even if it would hurt Michael, he'd do anything to save Trevor, and he'd take his secrets with him to the grave.

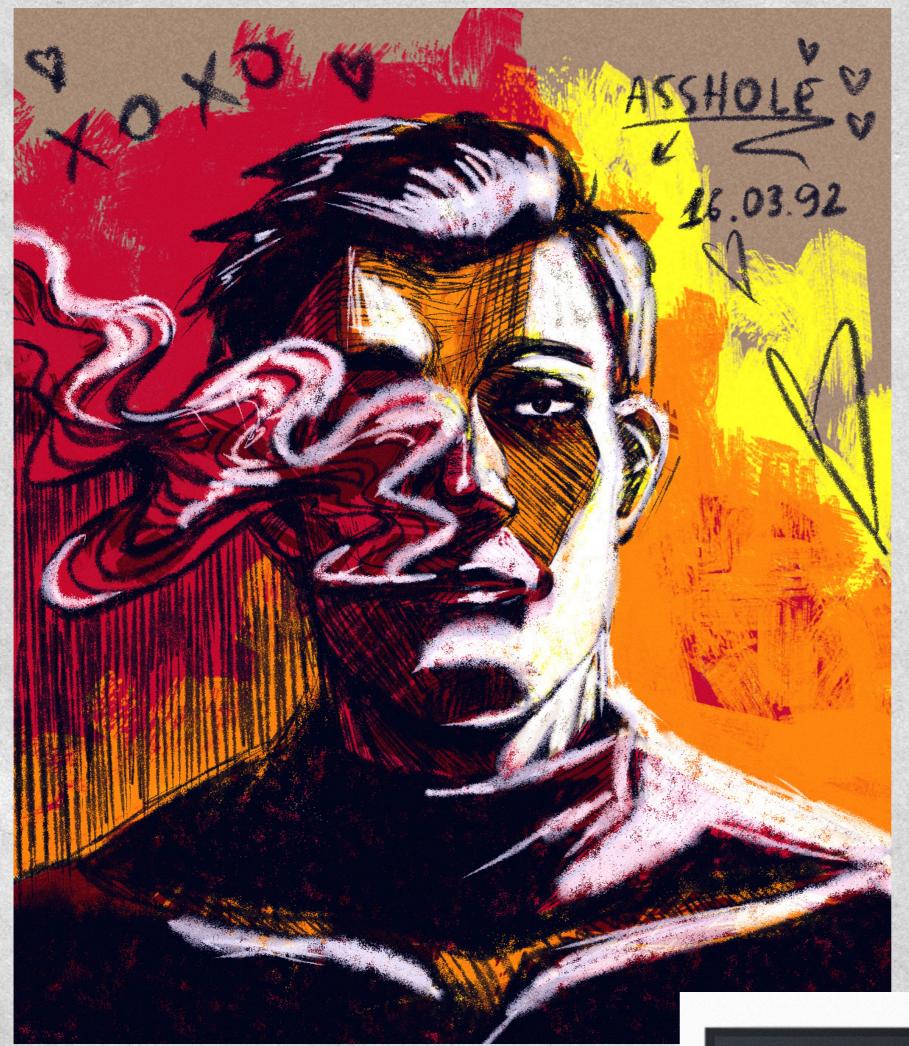
The cold feeling was back, his sun was dying, but he wasn't going to let it supernova, not when he held the keys to save his Apollo.

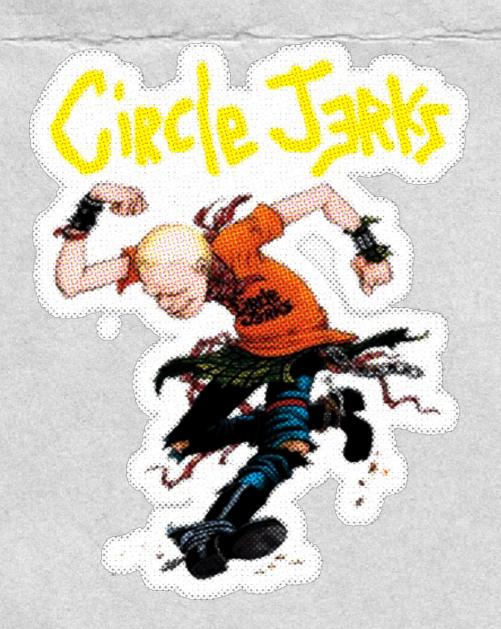
He texted Norton and let him know that preparations were complete, everything for Ludendorff was a go. He said that he didn't get cold feet.

But when Dave had said he'd taken another approach that day on his wedding, he was correct. He *had* by taking Trevor as a mistress of sorts, so while Amanda had suspected he was fucking all sorts of other women, he was in the arms of the only other miserable bastard on the planet who understood him.

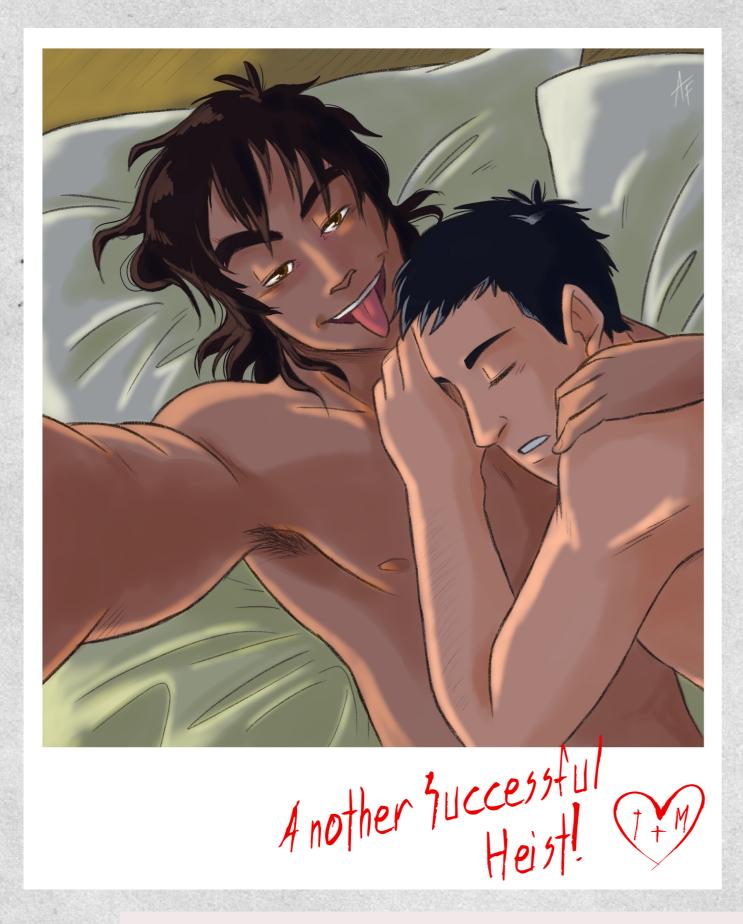
It was funny how often life repeated itself: he was about to take another approach in the form of Brad being the one to eat a bullet. Trevor would have his freedom one way or another, so help him.

AN: Drop The Game is by Flume and Chet Faker













Mikey, becuz juk u that y wish had never told a about the gas, a ful. hat wus n strikt konfidens n fukju, ther is nothing from with my gramer. I just lick I me n at the end of the day, numburs only matur neway!!!

So fuk all the way off. m gad u said u missed me n that u liek me. Log mo søing Lownd liek a chick now but I need I no how, much pliek me? ligk tatoo, my name on u kind of love or just a fick getting head from symtiems kind of love? here things important I no, likey! have needs in the shape of ur sweet ass. love u zo much Ome rev ur

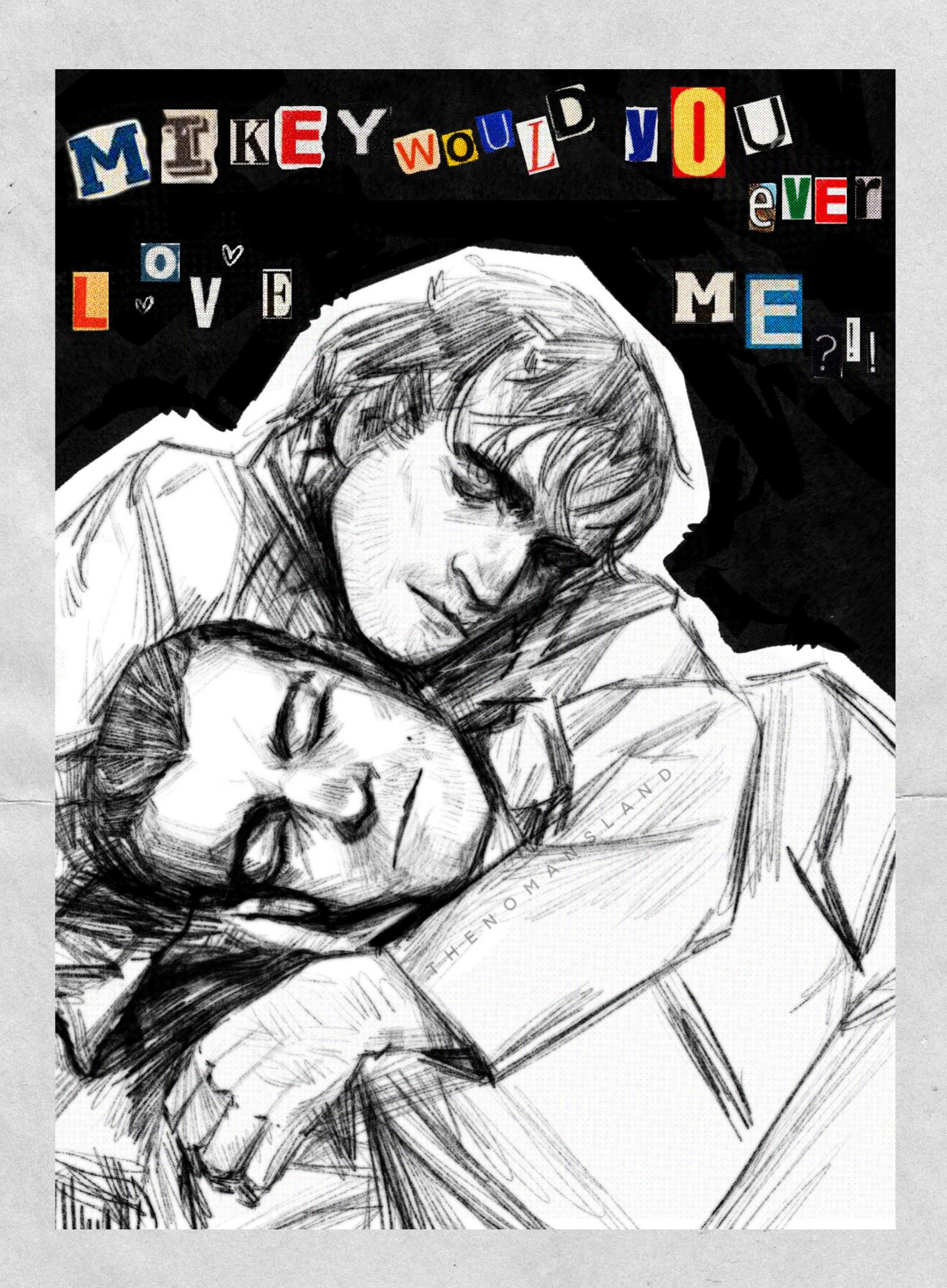
Of man, you gotta chill on that shit just a little because not only am I not tallooing your name on any fucking part of my body, but you're going crazy with this whole thing. I like you, Of, but didn't say we're running out to get matching rings or some shit, man. Jou gotta play it cool. Is it a bad things to just want to have fun and not be tied down? De ve both lived through so much bullship, so don't we deserve a liftle freedom? So I guess I can't really answer if the way you want, but we're together, right, and I'm not going anywhere. And about asses, yours belongs to yours truly, don't fucking forget that. Jour secret love of gas is safe with me along all your other fucked up bullshif, as long as you do the same for me. And a getting head kind of love can be arranged, right! I mean, I'm down. Come rev you up, huh. Cute. What do I get. Better be cock, Nike

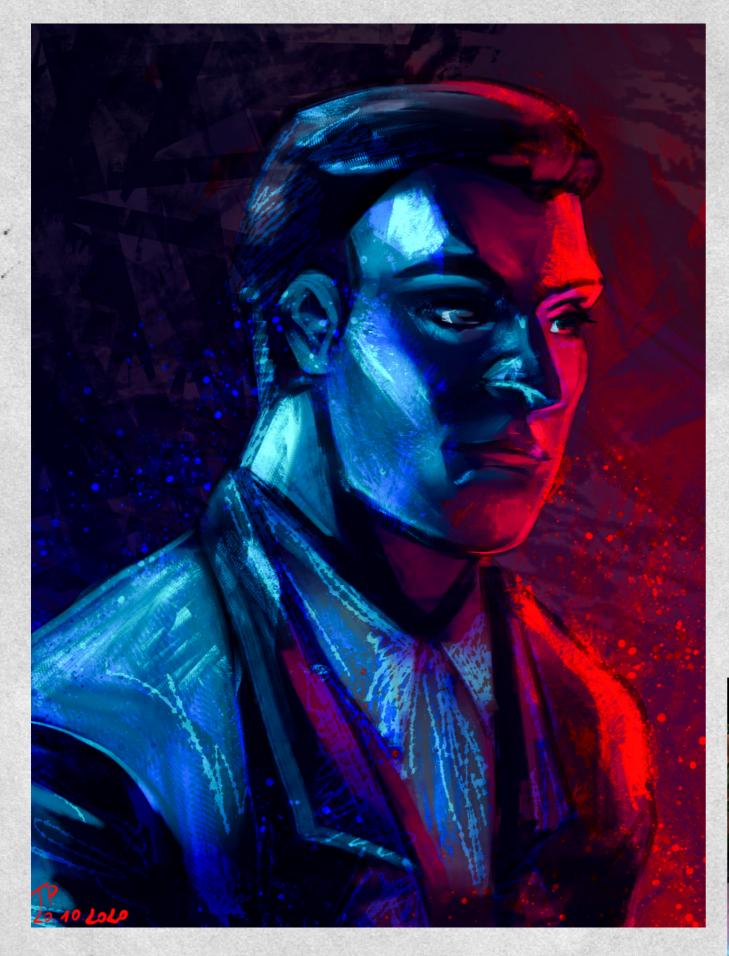
FUK YEA SHUR MICHAEL JUST FUN U FUKEN FUKSTIK DRIGK

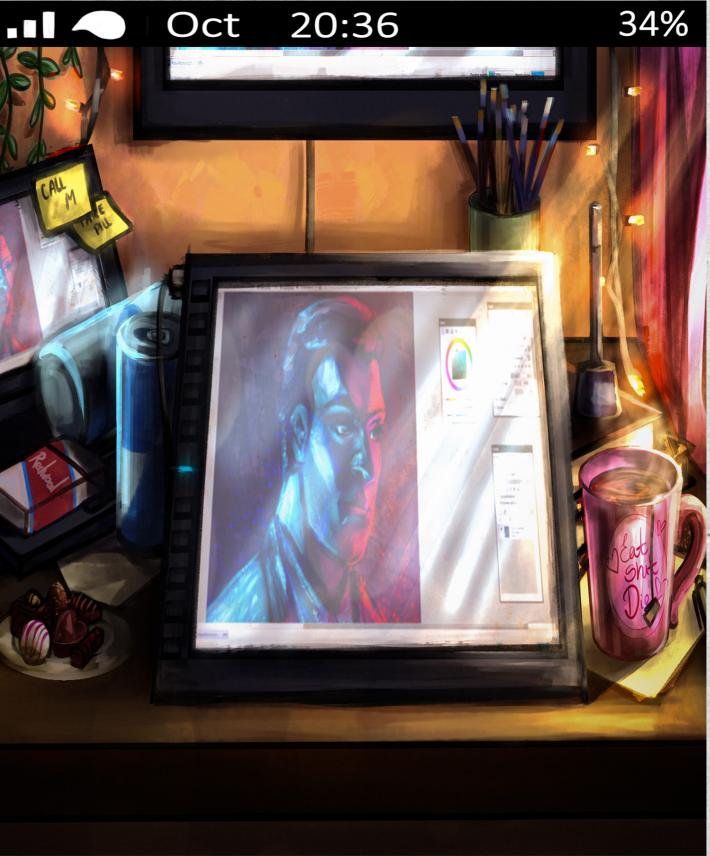
i juken hate u wen u do me liek this

i love u

Trev. Come on, baby, don't do me that way. There's no need to get so hostite, and the only prick we need to discuss is whose prick is getting sucked after we complete this next job. Seriously, you've got to stop getting so fucking pissed off about everything or you're gonna stroke out, and you know Lester will bitch about hazard payagain. Now stop being such a bitch unless... You got that slinky black number and those leggings still? Come work out some of that frustration, you sick fuck, if you catch my drift?! Don't keep me waiting, Mike















Liked by frankclinton, kingofls_ldavis and 1,349 others

t_revorphilips Drawing sneks. This quarantine shit drives me crazey ronnie_j We miss you, boss :(((

mike_de_santa ♥ You are crazy how long have I know you, you dick! tracey_suxxx ♥ ♥ ♥











Locked Up trepidatingboarfetus

Gotta find a way to break you down Pushing till you let me in You don't have to be alone Maybe you're not, I wouldn't know Cause you keep it all locked up

Trevor laid before him, sleeping off another bad night of whatever the fuck had caused him to go on a bender and cry himself hoarse. He had remembered the words "mom," "dad," "fucking doctors who think they know everything," and "fucking feelings" coming up at least several times, and as much as he had tried to talk to his often volatile friend, he had been pushed away and told to fuck off.

So he had kindly fucked off until the sobbing started, but try as he might, he couldn't ignore that. It took him to places in his memories where he had been a little boy, crying in the corner of his room, huddled under covers and pillows while his parents fought each other for the hundredth time that week, and he went forgotten without anything to eat, just a permanent pain in their ass.

He had cursed at himself silently and moved towards the bed, chewing on his knuckles anxiously until he caught himself doing that and cursed again, this time openly. What the fuck was he supposed to do? They hadn't been running together *that* long, just under a year, but fuck, he cared about the guy and the night terrors seemed to be ramping up in the brief time he'd known him.

And so he had stayed sitting next to Trevor on the bed, watching over him while he cried himself to sleep, and even as he slept, he still hadn't moved, remaining like some breathing golem.

Occasionally, he whimpered in his sleep, and it called to something buried deep within Michael, dared him to reach out and touch him, like gently stroking and taming some sort of wild spirit only he could understand, but he'd shake his head and wonder what the fuck had gotten into himself.

Another bad terror moved through the boy who was barely a man next to him, and it shook his whole body, almost appearing like a seizure and worried Michael nearly to death. Trevor's longish locks were slick with sweat and clinging to his skin, and he panted as if he were in pain. It went on for several minutes like that until his eyes shot open, and he screamed, "MIKEY!"

Michael grabbed his friend's hand reassuringly. "Whoa, buddy. What is it? I'm right here."

Hazel eyes peered up at him warily, and a tongue darted out to lick quivering lips. "You... you wouldn't leave me, would you?"

"Where the hell is this coming from?" He looked at Trevor in confusion. What had ever given him the idea that he'd do that??

"Just answer the fucking question, will ya!" Trevor barked at him, nearly snarling like a mad dog that had been prodded, and Michael inched away from him out of habit until he noticed how that left a sorrowful look in his friend's eyes.

What the fuck had Trevor been through already in his time on this planet? "No, I wouldn't just up and leave you. You should know that by now."

"I don't know anything," Trevor mumbled half-heartedly, more to himself than to Michael. "People always leave me." It felt like his eyes were penetrating Michael's soul. "You'll leave me too."

Then he laid back down and turned his back to Michael.

He sat quietly contemplating the not-quite-a-boy-or-man beside him, not understanding how to get through to him, to get him to see that they were in this *together*, and he had meant it. Michael Townley was a man of his fucking word.

His hand had a mind of its own and reached out to stroke Trevor's back before he had even finished the thought, but as soon as he realized he was doing it, it wasn't so bad. Why had he been so nervous about doing this?

And so he rubbed Trevor's back in earnest who answered with one long groan of suffering and looked back at him with a glare as if he'd done the worst goddamn thing in the world instead of just trying to help ease his friend's misery.

"What the fuck are you doing, Michael??"

Michael choked slightly as if he had been thrust back to the days when he was still getting caught jerking off by his mom, but then he thought about who was in front of him and stared back, steeling himself. "I was just trying to make you feel better, you dumbass. Jesus, there's no need to snap my head off."

Trevor heaved a huge sigh and ground his hand down his face. "You aren't fucking helping at all."

"Well, how the fuck *can* I help?? Tell me!" It was silent for several minutes with Trevor looking just like a scared rabbit, eyes darting everywhere except Michael. "For fuck's sake, say *something*!"

"What do you want me to say??" Trevor cried out and started to sob again. "You can't help!" In a smaller voice, he admitted, "You're part of the problem."

"What the fuck did *I* do??" he shouted back exasperated. For fuck's sake, they *had* to be able to talk to be partners even if they weren't the world's best at this chick shit because their relationship would never last if they couldn't get past stupid small stuff like this.

...when had he started viewing them as a relationship?

Trevor moaned into his hands. "You exist, OK? You...you're here, and you exist."

"That doesn't even make any fucking sense."

"Why are you making me spell it out, Mikey? Do you like torturing me? I mean, so did everyone else," Trevor whispered into the darkness of the room.

That was more about his past than he'd ever told Michael so far, but it came on the back of riddles that needed to be figured out, and it honestly sounded as if his friend was saying that he was the reason for his pain which made him frown. He didn't like that, didn't like it at all. "I'm sorry if I'm hurting you, T. You're my friend, you dipshit. You're supposed to say something if—"

"I DON'T WANT TO BE 'JUST FRIENDS,' YOU COCK TEASE!" Trevor yelled into his face with the force of a wailing banshee, panting just as he had been when he came out of his fevered dream. "Do...d-do you get it now? Do you hate me now? Are you going to leave?" he whispered with his eyes closed.

He was stunned into silence. Never in his life had he been on the end of something like this. Yeah, he'd played football, and everyone joked about who did what to whom, but no one had ever dreamed of doing anything to him beyond the same set of girls who'd followed him everywhere.

It's not like he hadn't had random thoughts or dreams at times, but he just hadn't acted on them. He'd thought it was that way for everyone.

And now he had a living, breathing confession right here in front of him, screaming at his body to do something, anything, just *do something*. Why didn't he move??

Trevor looked at him sadly and moved away from him. "You're going to leave. All the same."

His same offending hand reached out without his permission and touched the person it desired, gripping his shoulder tenderly. Michael sighed lowly. "I'm not going to leave. You're my friend, and I...I love you, OK?"

His friend shivered like an old dog, chilled to the bone. "No, you don't. You're going to leave, and I'm going to be alone again just like in my fucking dream."

He grabbed Trevor's hands and held them. "You're not alone. I'm here." And then his body did something before his mind could react.

Their lips met, and he'd never known that Trevor's lips could be so soft or sweet like beer residue and maple, but he knew that he didn't want to stop tasting. And he liked the sounds his friend made while his tongue slipped inside for more of that taste.

His heart thumped wildly behind its bony cage. This was something wonderful and scary at the same time, and he wasn't sure what it was because it was all new, just like those days long ago now when he'd realized that the person next to him was more important than just "some contact."

What was it about this guy? Why him? He was like a damsel in distress minus the damsel part. He did things, brought out sides of Michael that had long laid dormant. He wanted to rescue Trevor, to fix him, to help him, protect him.

"I'm at my best when I'm with you." It was as simple as that to him.

AN: Locked Up is by Big Deal.

Oh juk yea Mikey u beter beleev i hav that blak dress i will ride u all nite long in that jukker if u want i will drop I the foor if i want en take u in my mowth liek a gud lil slut zite i bet u wud liek that so much me b a slut 2 u well fuk so wud i wat r u gonna do aboot this big hard kok now Mikey im prity tukken hard rite now u no wat r we gonna do aboot this?

i gotta kraving n the name of it is u in also gonna wurk on how i writ so u'll stop pissin all ovur me about my tukken Kween's Fenglesh. Jukstik. did neyl evur tell u that u r so anal about that? u no wat they say about puyz who r so anal rite Mikey? just gonna b u n me rite! nun of that new gurl frum the klub rite? i just want it 2 b u n me ok! just u me n that yummy dick n this dress year year i love u so much

OK, Just what the fuck do you have against Mandy? She's none of your fucking business, just a little little fun to have on the side, you know? You take everything so damn seriously, it's annoying and it tires me the hell out, man. you know you're my number one anyway. I drop everything for you, for fuck's sake so at least be grateful for once, will ya? You keep doing the things you do in that goddamn dress, and I won't need to think about nobody else ever, now will I? Come bounce on my cock and maybe I'll lose a number. Things like that happen all the time. It's a shame, you know? Mikey,

wat kinda fukken fool do u think i am?
i c the way u 2 keep lookin at each othur
she looks liek she wud b happee if ol t took a rons
turn in 2 a bullet sumwher
u dont c the way she looks at the sans wen u hav
ur bak turnt fukken evul eye shit
i will proof it 2 u sumhow

u drop thingz 4 me? sens wen? u gotta a fukken god kompleks we need 2 tawk aboot? fukken ass

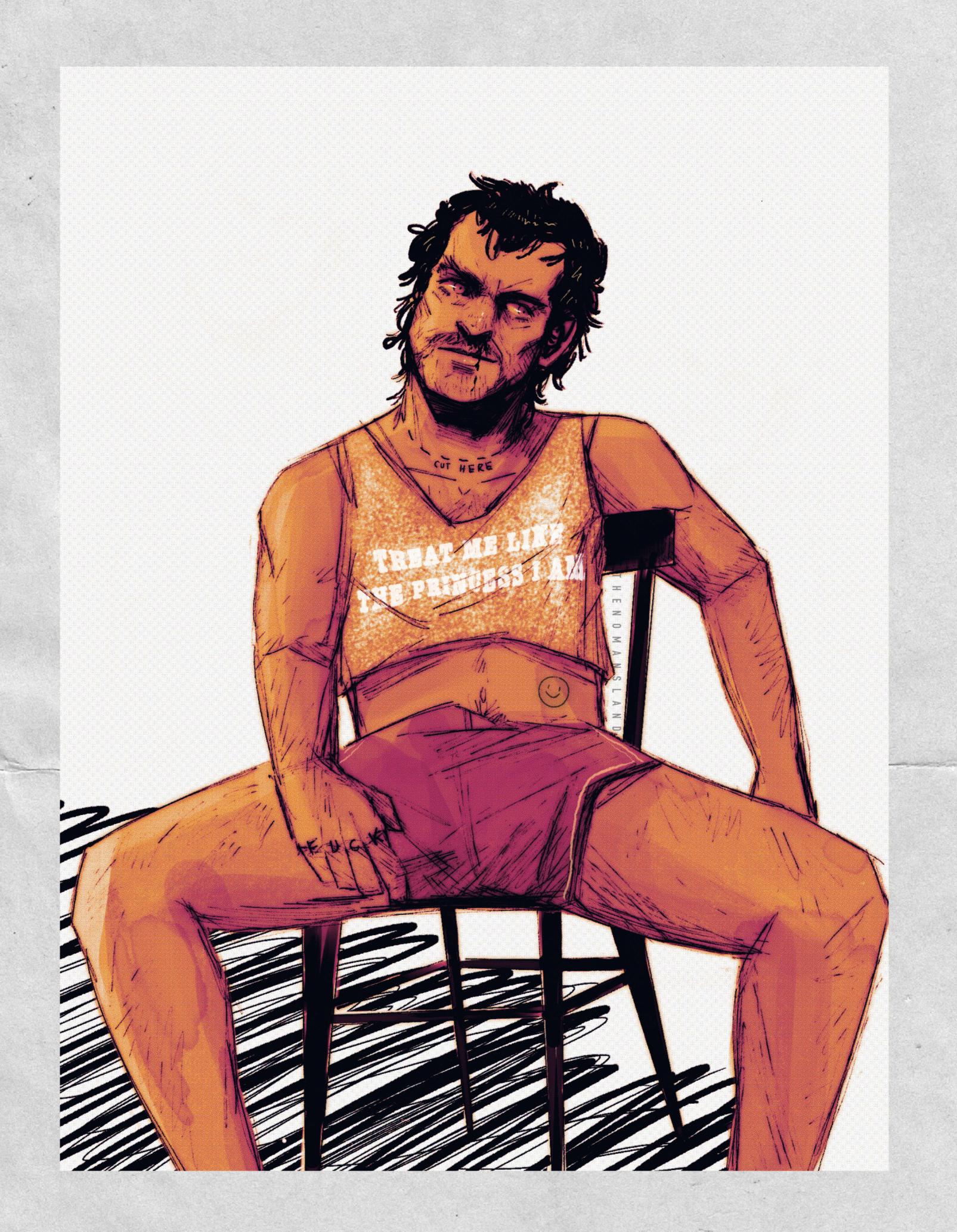
u beter loze that nummer if u no wats sud all u need is me n all i want is u thats all i evur want is u

but u didnt c nothin i fukken love u

yea ill bring the fukken dress

Trev, Me need to talk soon. A problem come up, and I don't know what Meet me at OBannon's for beers,	to do.
Just you and me, no Brad tagging or Moses either. No one else know	
Want it to stay that way right not Mike	

its gonna take me a white to figur this out y how i feel. u cant just go out 4 a beer n xpekt a guy 2 b ok with a babee y weddin bells all in 1 shot, specially wen they will be 4 sums else, how do u xpekt me 2 feel?? happee?? u r jukken reely a promised, not & hurt me but u, did anyway and wikey, so dam gud Mikey, so dam gud i sukken hate u 4 it but i love u 4 it 2 im a sukken mess inside



Crying trepidatingboarfetus

I was alright for a while
I could smile for a while
But I saw you last night, you held my hand so tight
As you stopped to say, "Hello"
Oh, you wished me well, you couldn't tell

Why the hell was he here in this fucking gorilla suit pretending to be OK with this sham of a stupid ass marriage? Why had he let Lester talk him into this shit? No, he could be out doing anything other than standing here with his Dixie cup full of cheap booze -- because only the best from the stripper bride's pimping parents, of course -- trying to look like he gave half a damn about the whole "best man" act like he and Michael even knew what the fuck it entailed other than one bachelor party with hookers and blow which had only ended with his mouth around Michael's dick giving him hopefully the best goddamn head of his natural life as usual. But Amanda didn't have to know that last part, obviously.

The tuxedo grated on his nerves, just a bit too tight around the collar, and he hated it, but as he fiddled with it, a hand came up from behind him and batted his away. "Stop that," Michael clucked anxiously. "You're going to fuck it up."

He turned to gaze upon the face he loved to look at even though it hurt so much to see it right then. "OK, princess. I'll leave it be since it's your special day," he goaded goodnaturedly and chuckled as Michael rabbit-punched him in the shoulder a few times.

"You're a jackass, T," his best friend laughed, and his eyes sparkled with a hint of delight as he did so. Then he stuck his hand out as if he were expecting something, and Trevor stared at him in confusion until Michael spoke up, bemused, "You Canucks *do* know what a fucking handshake is, right?"

Oh, that fucking asshole!

He took Michael's right hand in his, and it was more of a battle of wills and strength than a handshake as they both gripped as hard as possible while staring into each other's eyes. Michael was the first to relent with a little snicker under his breath as he pulled Trevor to him in a hug and whispered into his ear, "Hey, thanks for being here for me. It means a lot to me."

Trevor shivered against him and mumbled back, "Yeah, well thank Les for that, not me."

Michael pushed back and glared at him. "What the hell is that supposed to mean?"

"I just...I," he started, but the words fizzled out on his tongue. There didn't seem to be

much of a point to uttering them now, and it would all just end in regret, so he heaved a long sigh. "You know, Mikey, it doesn't matter. It's your day. Go enjoy it." He smiled brightly, his lips twitching a bit.

His friend was still staring at him as if he were examining him, so he tried to relax and make his smile more believable, but if Mikey didn't move on, he was going to fucking crack. He could already feel his eyes trying to leak.

"You're sure you're OK, Trev?" Michael looked at him in disbelief.

That I'd been crying over you
Crying over you
Then you said, "So long"
Left me standing all alone
Alone and crying
Crying
Crying
Crying
It's hard to understand
But the touch of your hand
Can start me crying

He had to get out of there before he made a fool of himself. "Yeah, Mikey. I'm good." He coughed a bit to mask the way his voice was starting to tremble. "Just need a drink. Something in my throat." He moved to walk away, but the touch of Michael's hand jerked him out of his self-preservatory thoughts, and he stopped.

"You *know* I love you, right??" his friend said in a fit of desperation. He cleared his throat. "You're my best friend, I'll always love you."

It hurt. It fucking *hurt*. He did love him, and he didn't want to lose him, but *goddamn* did it hurt to hear that. It physically pained him to know that unless he could somehow go back and convince the fates to have him be born with the correct fucking body parts that would allow Michael to get over his own repressed upbringing so they could be together, he would always be the consolation prize. Amanda would be first. He would always be a second thought.

He was always someone's second thought. He had. To. LEAVE.

And he was saved blessedly by the grand prize.

"Ah shit, what the hell does she want? I'll be right back, T, don't run off." And like that, Michael was gone. Off towards the new Mrs. Townley who was already showing in her bargain bin wedding dress.

But Trevor couldn't stay any longer. The tears were already coming as he passed Lester who nodded at him understandingly as he barreled out of the community center double doors and the fuck away from there to solitude where he could fucking sob in peace and lost pieces.

I thought that I was over you
But it's true, so true
I love you even more than I did before
But darling, what can I do?
For you don't love me
And I'll always be

He backed up against a tree near a bench and took a deep breath before he began to let the crying commence, wondering if the tears were going to fucking stop at this rate. He hadn't cried so much since his dad had left him in the goddamn shopping mall, and this pain was so eerily similar, such a soul-sucking loss. He loved *LOVED* Michael with all that he was, just like he'd loved his dad, goddammit, and here he was, just a big fucking sucker. It hadn't mattered in the end then or now, he thought bitterly as he wiped the snot dribbling miserably from his chin. He couldn't just turn that shit off, either. What the fuck was he supposed to do now that Michael was playing one half of the happy homemaker duo?

"TREVOR!"

He squirmed against the tree, choking down his next batch of cries. He could hear footsteps crunching through the scattered leaves carpeting the ground, and he clapped a hand over his mouth and bit down, trying to still himself so he wouldn't be found, but he knew better.

For fuck's sake, he just wanted to be alone in his misery. He didn't want to have to go back in there and pretend to be OK anymore. He wanted to go back to his shitty fucking room, drink to his heart's content, and then snort several lines of coke until the damn thing exploded so he didn't have to feel anything ever again.

More tears came down on their own no matter what he did.

Crying over you
Crying over you
Yes, now you're gone
And from this moment on
I'll be crying
Crying
Crying
Crying
Crying
Yeah crying

Crying Over you

"Trevor, where the fuck did you go?" Michael called out and then under his breath, he added, "Asshole."

Unaware that said asshole could hear him plain as day several feet away, his bloodshot eyes widening and then clinching shut due to his suffering. After a few minutes of waiting, his married best friend shrugged and gave up, walking back towards the building to start his new life.

Unaware that a former lover now turned best friend was slinking across town to drown his sorrows for the night so he could try to forget his now old one.

AN: Crying is by Roy Orbison.



Welcome the birth of Tracey Marie Townley Tknow you as ent talking to me right now. Thevos, but Just wanted you to know that she hade it OK and thank. you again for coming to the wedding even though I know that had to be tough. I'm sorry, man. I never meant to hust you, but that's alf I've ever managed to do, ignitif. Why do you keep coming back, you beautiful dumbass. I never meant to hurt you by getting with Amanda. I was just told it was time to start growing up, and you are one of those pieces that doesn't quite fit in the grown up world We can be best friends, and I can love you like a best priend, but we can't do what we do. People call us queers behind our backs, and I fucking hate that for us. Trevor And we've getting too old to prefend we've some sort of Bonnie and Olyde or some ship Especially now that I have a kid to think about. I need. To provide for her future. [fucking love yoon, but

YOU WANTED SOMETHING YOU COULD UNDERSTAND HERE'S SOME ENGLISH YOU CAN UNDERSTAND YOU HURT HURT ME, YOU ASSHOLE AND YOU CAN'T JUST SAY SORRY AND EXPECT THAT TO FIX IT YOU'LL ALSO NEVER BE NORMAL SO GET USED TO CRAVING A MICE FAT COCK IN YOUR MOUTH WHILE YOU'RE BONING THOSE PLASTIC TITTIES FROM BEHIND. YOU'RE IN DENIAL. YOU SPEAK LIKE YOUR FATHER IS SPEAKING FOR YOU, NOT YOU. I GET IT. WE ALL HAVE A CHIP ON OUR SHOULDER, OUR BURDEN TO BEAR, AND THIS IS YOURS.

I WAS READY TO FACE IT, WITH YOU NO MATTER WHAT, BALLS TO THE WALL, BUT HERE WE ARE. FUCK YOU FOR EVERYTHING YOU DO TO ME, AND FUCK YOU FOR MAKING ME FEEL BAD FOR EVEN HATING YOU FOR IT.

GIVE PRINCESS TRACE A KISS FOR ME.

1

IHATEYOUIHATEYOUIHATEYOUIHATEYOUIHATEYOUIHATEYOU

STILL NOT TALKING HUH YOU PRICK
I GO THROUGH ALL THIS SHIT JUST TO GET YOU TO
LISTEN AND IT FUCKING FIGURES YOU DON'T LISTEN. IT
TRULY FUCKING FIGURES. IM ALWAYS CHASING AFTER
OTHERS INSTEAD OF LETTING THEM COME AFTER ME
AND WELL FUCK IT. IF YOU WANT A PIECE OF ME YOU
FUCKSTAIN, YOU KNOW WHERE TO FIND ME

YOU ALWAYS KNOW WHERE TO FIND ME DOES OUR PRECIOUS MANDY HAVE ANY IDEA THAT YOU ALWAYS SEEM TO JUST KNOW HOW AND WHEN TO FALL INTO MY ARMS WHEN YOU'RE DRUNK AND I NEVER TELL HER BECAUSE I LOVE YOU TOO MUCH GO BACK TO YOUR WIFE YOU STUPID MOTHERFUCKER AND STAY THIS TIME

SHE'S EXPECTING AGAIN. DID YOU THINK I HAD NO IDEA? I HAVE MY WAYS.

GO HOME AND STAY THERE BEFORE YOU HURT US BOTH BEFORE IT BECOMES TOO HARD TO STOP

OR SO HELP ME ILL KILL YOU

ILOVEYOUILOVEYOUILOVEYOUILOVEYOUILOVEYOUILOVEYOU

I've crumbled this up and restarted so many fucking times. Don't you know it's already too late for that? It's too late to stop. I want to fucking stop, but I can't, and I don't know why. Fuck you, maybe you're right. Maybe I am in denial. What the fuck does that change, exactly? I'm stuck with two kids. Two kids, a marriage to someone I care for but she's not the person I the person the one I She's not you, OK? She'll never be you, let's face it. I'm a fucking embarrasament to my family, my parents, my hometown, to anyone I've ever known my heart doesn't care goddammit. It just doesn't care because I need you like I need the goddamn air to breathe. I can't even get poetic with amanda, Trevor. That has to mean something, doesn't it? Please don't push me out. Don't send me away.

Give Up the Thing That You Love

trepidatingboarfetus

The first time I saw you
I knew it would never last
I'm not half what I wish I was
I'm so angry
I don't think it'll ever pass
And I was bad news for you just because
I never meant to hurt you

Summer always ended just as quickly as it came that far up north in the States, signaling the approaching change of seasons and colder weather with it. He hunched on the hood of the car facing towards the lake, knees bent towards his face, and his chin rested gently on top of them. He was deep in thought about how many years had already passed since he'd met the man who was going to become one of the greatest thieves of the century, he just knew it. Hell, they were well on their way -- all of them.

He knew it because Michael Townley had stolen his heart long ago and refused to give it back ever since.

The sky turned a deep angry red while he fiddled with some healed scabs, tearing the skin and watching the fresh blood pool with a sort of mixed fascination that he saved generally for hunting or shooting people while on the job. His mind drifted back to the first time he'd ever laid two anxious eyes on a dusty cloud of destruction coming towards him at the hanger, and he felt the wave of familiar emotions tug at his heart again.

A sea of happiness, misery, love, rage, confusion, want, and something close to a sort of boyish innocence coasted and crashed inside the walls of his mind. It was a terrifying body of emotions to him. He understood rage, confusion, misery, and want independently of each other, but *every* single thing and *all together* at once? He felt as if he were slowly drowning in his head. There was nowhere safe to pull himself up and out of the mess.

So he just kept sinking.

He focused on the lake before him and pictured himself slipping beneath the surface of the cool water, the bottom forever being just out of his reach, and his breath coming in slower, agonizing gasps until his throat closed as if he were the one at the helm doing the choking.

And he could see himself doing it; a darker, older, more sadistic copy of him tightening his grip on the muscles, tendons, and ligaments while feeling them whine and pop miserably against his hands, smiling viciously and victoriously into a young, still slightly innocent doe-eyed version of himself in one of the many dresses his mother had made him

wear as a boy, not understanding what was happening to him but maybe smiling warmly back because even then he had welcomed what was at the end of that sweet feeling of death's release though he'd had a healthy dose of fear in him for it.

He wouldn't have been mad at all. He would've been thankful.

But right now, he was on the hood of a car doing nothing but contemplating shit which was nothing at all, really. He felt like he was going nowhere with his life.

When he met Michael, it was supposed to have been the both of them, in his mind, balls against the wall. Doing whatever they could to have fun and making a buck while doing so. That's what it had been for him. Mikey had been all about The Big Picture, drafting plans, determining futures, and putting stock in all of that while he had just been along for the amusement of it all.

He'd only wanted to watch Michael work his magic because he was so damn remarkable at what he did, and there was a fucking drop-dead sexiness in the way that he carried himself, the slickness that he had, the self-assuredness that he just *knew* everything was going to turn out right because he'd worked things from every imaginable angle, and he *had* because that's where having been a quarterback and team captain previously had come in pretty fucking handy.

God, he could be forever happy doing things to that man with his body.

Life had other plans. Michael had other plans. He met Amanda one rainy day when they had some time between jobs to fuck around at the local titty bar. She was more thrilled to talk to *any* one of them other than Michael to the point that it nearly made him choke with laughter at poor Mikey's obvious displeasure that he begged and sent her towards his floundering buddy after loading her hand with a few twenties, asking her to "be kind" and "let him think he's a lady's man."

However, somewhere in the midst of all of that goodnatured ribbing, she'd actually begun to like Michael, and well, he'd never planned on that happening, so he had waited for it to end all the way up until the fateful day Mikey had come barreling into Lester's house while they were shooting the shit during the early planning stages of the *next big thing* and had nearly screamed his lungs out that he wasn't ready to be a fucking father, but he had to marry Amanda. He'd honestly looked for it to end then, and when he was asked to be the best man, his heart had sunk.

How does one say no to their best friend? How does one tell him that it's impossible to be there? That they can't watch him get married because the pain is a knife stabbing and twisting into their own heart?

He hadn't been able to trust his mouth to make the words, so he'd had to merely nod while biting his lip from the inside. And he kept biting and biting so hard that by the time Mi-

chael moved away, he was tasting blood.

So he'd swallowed his feelings hoping they would fall somewhere into the mighty sea that was his mind and drown, but it never happened.

Then little Tracey -- who had almost been named little Trevor and was still a sore point with the lovely fake-titted Amanda -- had come cooing into his arms and life, eyes full of the same teary blue as her father and wonder at him as she gazed upwards, and he hadn't wanted to put her down. He promised himself that he would never let anything happen to that cute face, and when her brother came after her, he made the same promise again. These were his makeshift family of the likes which he never spoke to Michael for fear and embarrassment that his friend would never quite understand his affection for those kids, but Amanda, oh she sure got it. She got it just fine, and she didn't like it.

She did everything she could to push him out, even being in her husband's ear like a little worm.

And he knew -- he *knew* -- it was only a matter of time before Michael finally sat and processed through shit so he could do the inevitable partner dumping, and that's why he was out there currently, thinking things through. Carefully processing. Whatever fucking pretty label there was to stick to cutting someone out of your life.

He'd fucked up a few nights ago. Massively.

They hadn't even had but a few beers and maybe a couple of shots, him with some gold tequila, salt, and lime because he was feeling a little advantageous at the time for whatever reason he couldn't recall anymore, and they had been cutting up over something stupid Brad had done during a job when something had changed. He wasn't even sure what it was or where or when or even why, but Michael had just *looked* at him, and something had changed in their chemistry. His cheeks had reddened as they'd stared at each other, and Trevor had thought it was the most beautiful thing he'd ever seen, but he had accidentally said it out loud.

Their lips had met in the stall of that men's bathroom as if they had been starved while waiting to meet for years.

His hands had easily found their way to the zipper of his best friend's jeans and had listened for any tell-tell signs that said it needed to stop but had only heard the slight intake of breath, gasping he had guessed, but it wasn't anything that had said "no" so he'd went on. He hadn't dared to look Michael in the eyes until his cock was snuggled inside of his mouth, and when he had glanced up, what he had found waiting for him had made his heart ache all the more.

Michael's eyes were a bitter war of blue emotions, but the one that had stood out the most was love. On some level, he loved Trevor as Trevor loved him. All these wasted years. And

that had hurt, hurt to the fucking core.

So he had shown him what he had missed. He'd only ever let one guy dare to touch him *there*, and that guy had ended up with a hockey stick crammed up his dumb fat ass. He usually did the fucking, but with Michael, somehow, it was all butterflies and idolatry, and Michael took the lead as he did with all things. And Trevor was OK with letting him because it just felt natural.

Goddamn had it felt natural. It had felt absolutely spectacular with Michael. They'd fumbled like fucking virgins on prom night, but somehow Mikey had made it feel great, and Christ, it had been *every fucking thing* he'd ever imagined it to be while he was jerking off, dreaming, or a combination of the two.

Then post-orgasmic rush, they'd clung to each other, and he'd announced like a fucking idiot that he'd been in love with the other man since they'd met so many years prior, but he'd never had the balls to tell him, and he'd never had any idea that Michael was even remotely into this sort of thing.

And his buddy had just looked down at the floor aimlessly with a weird glint in his eyes and had called it all "harmless fun."

Harmless fun. He, Trevor Philips, was just a *harmless fun fuck*. No better than a former stripping whore with fake plastic tits or her currently stripping whore sisters.

That is why he sat on the hood of the car, trying to gauge the situation and his emotions. What the fuck was he? Why had he allowed it to come to this? Why had he allowed himself to think with his fucking dick? Every time he let it do the talking, he ended up in trouble, and he really needed to stop doing that shit.

Fuck knew he was angry and confused, at Michael for closing himself off so soon right afterward, and at himself for even being so stupid to fall into such a trap in the first damn place. He had to stop letting booze be his gateway to these nasty truthful pitfalls.

Sadness, pain, and misery all came at once. Why? Jesus Christ, why did it have to hurt so much and right in the fucking chest? The only other people he'd ever let himself love were family, and after this, he'd cut his fool heart out and eat it before he'd *ever* love again. Never. *Never ever*.

Tires crushed along the gravel, and he didn't even have to glance back to know to whom that car belonged. He just knew, knew he'd come for him just like he always came for him during the rain of bullets or the onslaught of sirens.

And underneath everything else, he still felt love. Love for the best friend who obviously loved him too but couldn't say it back.

"Hey, yourself." He almost said, "Hey, asshole!" or some other combination of hey something-nasty because he was hurting and wanted to lash out, but he stopped himself because Mikey didn't deserve that shit. It wasn't his fault that *someone* couldn't keep himself in check, on a course originally charted all those years ago.

Their conversation started out awkward, and they talked about the events of a few nights ago, what Trevor kept referring to as The Big Mistake -- until Michael firmly but lovingly told him to shut the fuck up about it like that or *so help him*.

Everything in the atmosphere definitely changed between them, with Michael taking longer, more pensive looks while they sat through the rest of the evening discussing things. His brooding stares now seemed reserved for Trevor when those had previously been the place of his parents, his dead football career, his wife, bills, and OK, so *sometimes* maybe Trevor. But still, he couldn't handle any of it being directed at him. He just wanted Michael to be happy.

He just wanted his best friend back at the cost of his own soul.

But God, it left him with a bad taste in his mouth. He fucking hated himself and everything in the entire world. He just wanted to watch it burn red and orange like the fading sunset.

While Michael was busy rubbing his elbows anxiously and mumbling about something the kids had done at school -- Jesus, when had his babies gotten so big -- he swung his legs off the car, stood up, and focused intently on Michael's face, as if he were committing it to memory. Then he nodded to himself and clapped his hands loudly, the latter scaring Michael back to reality.

"What the fuck was that for? Are you crazy?? Wait, don't answer that."

"Michael," he called softly, and his friend stopped and stared, "it's OK. I release you. You don't need to come and check on me, I'll be alright."

"Release me?" Michael half-laughed, half-choked out as he slid down off the car and followed Trevor, something he did out of habit, and Trevor wasn't sure if he realized he did it or not. "Release me from *what*??"

His hand was on the door latch. It would be so easy to just go, to drive, and say nothing, but he knew he'd be followed because that's what Michael did. That's one of the things that he loved about the man. Sometimes he cared too much.

So he turned. "I love you, Michael, but I can't go on *loving* you. It's hurting me, and it's going to hurt you. I don't mean to hurt you. I'm a shitty friend." He smiled, but it cracked

halfway through. "I give you up."

Realization dawned in Michael's stormy eyes, and he grabbed Trevor to pull him close, kissed him as they had done that day in the bathroom, but it was a different sort of desperation, and when it was over, tears were streaming down his face like rain.

Trevor got in the car and pulled away from the lake. For the first time in many years, it was the first time he could remember where Michael didn't follow, and he didn't know how to feel about that. It was a whole new emotion for which he didn't have a name yet, but it was something different.

AN: The title and lyrics come from Pitseleh, a song by Elliott Smith.

fuck you
you talk about krowink up but you run away from yourself so what
the fuck do you call that? thats beink an adult in your world eh?

fuck it because youll never understand it
i sot sifts for my lil lovins brats whenever amanda feels like
lettins me in to see them i mean xmas is next week so you think
she could spare me a fuckins few minutes out of the kindness of
of her heart or has the plastic spread all the way from her
fuckins fake tits?

you're never sonna love me asain are you? we're never sonna just BE asain are we? only in my soddamn miserable lonely dreams

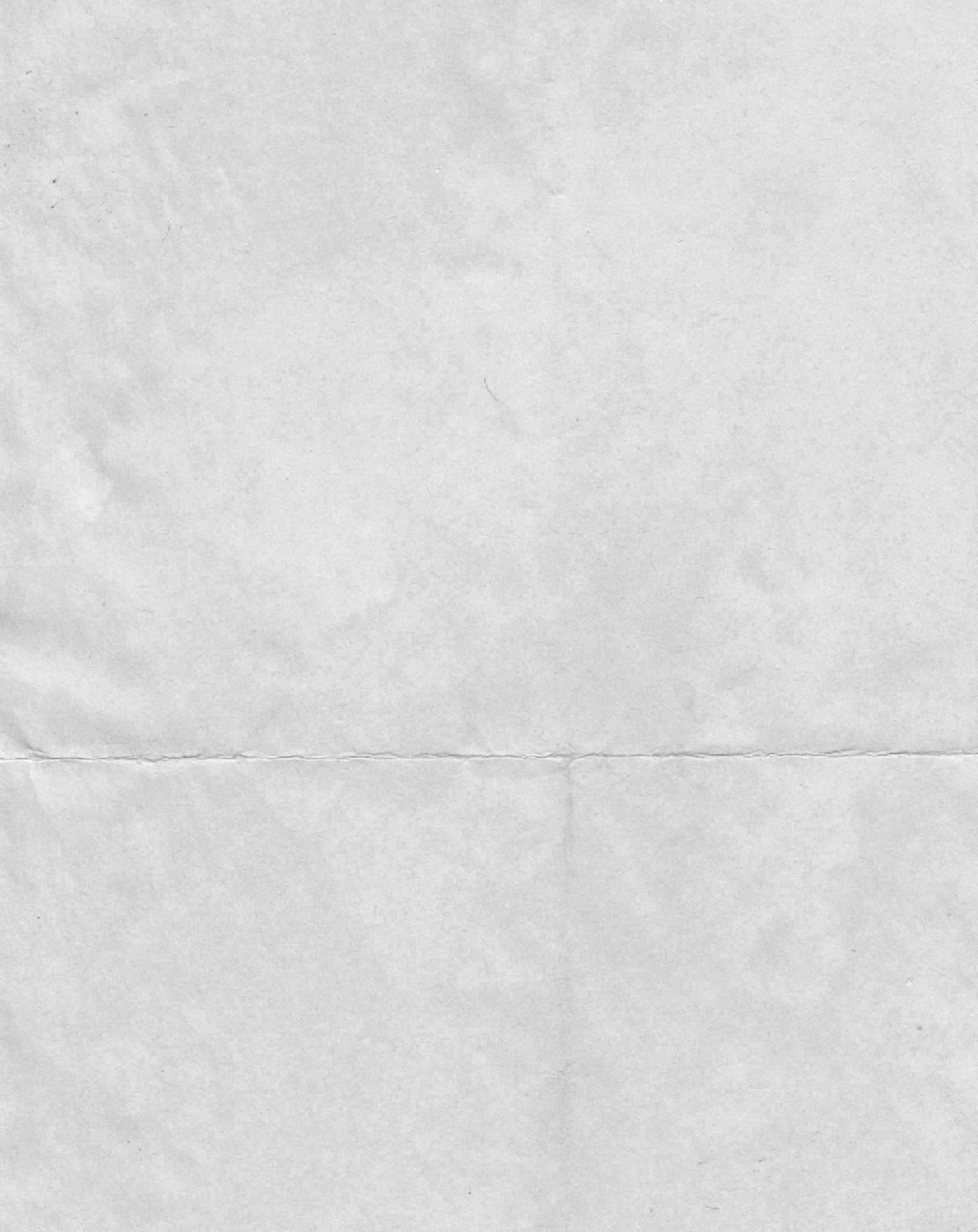
i never shut you out baby
you closed the door after you walked out
of course it means something but its not enough
it doesn't keep you here at night in my arms
you were never an embarrassment to me
why cant i be the only one who matters?
quit playing games with my head
quit destroying my heart
fuck you im done

If that's the way you want it, then I guess, you fucking prick, but you bitch about me at you'd do see the way you look at me when you think no one fou can't pretend it's all just me!!! I'm tired of	or, but I és looking. it.
There's no reason why you can't drop the gifts of using Amanda as a fucking excuse and stop bad's her just because you aren't getting any. She know friends, and there's no reason she'd be keeping you're not to coming over unless there's something you're not to	nouthing is we're
Is there?? I still don't understand why you have to treat n way. There's nothing wrong with doing shit just us. It's not like she'll ever find out, you know. I onto wo until you started afting cooky anyway.	between he wasn't
onto us until you started getting cocky anyway, just learn to shut the fuck up, we wouldn't have problem, would we? Dammit, I didn't mean to be so shitty. I just do know what to do here. I'm always used to being	n't know
of each situation, of knowing exactly what to do goes wrong, but now I need someone else to tel I need to do. I need you to tell me what to do.	when shit
 Mike	

I CAN'T TELL YOU WHAT TO DO MIKEY GOTTA FIGURE THAT OUT FOR YOURSELF NEED TO TELL THOSE KIDS TO STOP GETTING TOO BIG OR THEYLL BE BIGGER THAN UNCLE T SOON WE ARE ALL REALLY GETTING TOO OLD FOR ALL OF THIS SHIT ARENT WE? GETTING TIME TO PLAN THE BIG ONE GOTTA START MAKING OUR WAY TO IT GOTTA START GETTING SERIOUS

	I DONT KNOW WHY YOU ARENT TALKING TO ME OR ANSWERING YOUR FUCKING PHONE ANYMORE OR WHY
	I GOTTA RESORT TO THIS BULLSHIT LIKE WERE IN SOME GODDAMN GRAMMAR SCHOOL BUT HERE WE ARE MIKEY
	WHAT THE FUCK IS THE DEAL WITH THIS LUDENDORFF JOB EVEN LES SEEMS LIKE HE WANTS TO WIPE HIS HANDS OF
	THIS SHIT BUT HERE I AM BELTEVING IN YOU BECAUSE IT S YOU AND MICHAEL TOWNLEY DOESN'T FUCKING FALL RECAUSE IT'S A FUCKTON OF MONEY AND PUSHES US ALL
	CLOSER TO OUR DREAMS IT PUSHES YOU CLOSER TO BEING DONE AND I KNOW YOU WANT THAT
	I BELIEVE IN IT RECAUSE I BELIEVE IN YOU BECAUSE I LOVE YOU BUT BUT BUT GODDAMMIT I GOT TO BE HONEST IM FUCKING SCARED
	IM FUCKING SCARFD IM NEVER GONNA SEF YOU AGAIN
(SCARED YOURE GONNA BE DONE WITH THIS SHIT AND ME OR SOMETHINGS GONNA GO WRONG
	BUT I JUST KEEP BELIEVING IN IT BECAUSE ITS YOU BECAUSE I DONT WANT TO STOP BELIEVING IN YOU
	[wish you would talk to me. [miss you. [m going to try to drop this off somewhere [think you get it.
	Please please please fucking read it I'm so fucking sorry Please don't shut me out Mikey [love you
	Please don I shul me out Mikey [love you





WE'D LIKE TO EXTEND OUR WARMEST THANKS AND REGARDS TO EACH ARTIST AND WRITER WHO TOOK PART IN PUTTING TOGETHER THIS ELABORATE PROJECT OVER MULTIPLE WEEKS VIA DISCORD CHATS. YOUR DEDICATION FOR THIS AND THIS FANDOM IS SIMPLY AMAZING, AND IT HAS BORN A CONCEPT OF IMMACULATE BEAUTY INTO THE WORLD. WE HOPE YOU HAD AS MUCH FUN AS WE DID, AND WE HOPE WE CAN DO IT AGAIN IN THE FUTURE! THANK YOU SO MUCH!

aintgonnaleaveyoumikey

AO3: AINTGONNALEAVEYOUMIKEY | TUMBLR: NEVERGONNASIMPYOUMIKEY

Ruth Woytsek

AO3: TREPIDATINGBOARFETUS | TUMBLR: TREPIDATINGBOARFETUS | IG: RUTHWOYTSEK

A Shipping Life

TUMBLR: ASHIPPINGLIFE | IG & TWITTER: A_SHIPPING_LIFE | PATREON: A SHIPPING LIFE

AnneyLufkin

TUMBLR: TREVORPHILIPSSTANACCOUNT | TWITTER: ANNEYLUFKIN IG: ANNEYLUFKIN

shabawdy

TUMBLR: SHABAWDY | TWITTER: SHABAWDY | IG: SHABAWDY

HeinzWeber

TUMBLR: H-WEBER-EXE | IG: H_WEBER.EXE

Tanner C.

TUMBLR: TOOLATEFORASOLILOQUY | AO3: TOOLATEFORASOLILOQUY

houseplant

TUMBLR: MARINA-RASTENIYE

real_fanta_sea

TUMBLR: REAL-FANTA-SEA | AO3: REAL_FANTA_SEA

Adam S.

IG: CHKENNBLS | TUMBLR: ADAMYEKSANQ

The Emster

IG: EVILEMSTER7 | TUMBLR: THEEVILEMSTER | TWITTER: EVILEMSTER PATREON: THE EMSTER

Julia Scott

TUMBLR: INKDRINKER & ID-EGO

Prim42

TUMBLR: PRIM42/P-SILENT | TWITTER: P_SILENT42 | IG: P_SILENT42

thenomansland

TUMBLR: THENOMAN-SLAND | IG: THENOMAN.SLAND TWITTER: THENOMAN_SLAND

